SUNDAY TIMES

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OF INDIA

PRICE ₹6

Sanju Samson's 115 helps CSK (212/2) get their first win of IPL 2026 after 3 straight defeats as they beat Delhi Capitals by 23 runs, P 12

Asha Bhosle in hospital due to chest infection

Singer Asha Bhosle, 92, was admitted to Breach Candy Hospital Saturday evening, & is reported to be critical. Bhosle was reportedly administered cardiopulmonary resuscitation on arrival at the hospital and is being treated for cardiac and respiratory complications. TNN

DOUBLE DELIGHT

Today's bumper issue of **TOI** is organised in two sections, both equally packed with news and analysis. To get the full reading experience of today's edition, make sure you don't miss the other section

OTHER BOOK TOP STORIES

- Ayush one step from ending India's 61-yr wait for Asian title
- Karnataka HC strikes down 55-acre Hebbal land acquisition
- State drafts AI-focus digi-law to tighten social-media controls

Tracking the rise of humble benne dosa

A Pali Hill queue in Mumbai mistaken for a job or giveaway highlights the viral rise of benne dosa mania, driven by long lines at Mumbai's Rameshwaram Cafe. Once a humble Davanagere dish born from drought-era migration and homemade butter, it has become a pop culture sensation beyond Karnataka. Its signature — copious butter — now fuels obsession and debate. P 11

6 yrs after split, Ladakh replaces J&K in Aadhaar

Six years after J&K's bifurcation, Aadhaar records of Ladakh residents have been updated to reflect 'Ladakh' instead of 'Jammu & Kashmir'. The change, initiated after the LG's intervention, resolves long-standing issues in accessing services. Using PIN code-based updates, authorities enabled automatic corrections. Other Bk, P 4

Kuno welcomes 4 cubs, 1st wild birth by India-born cheetah

India's reintroduction project reached a milestone as a 25-month-old female at Kuno National Park gave birth to four cubs, marking the first wild birth by India-born cheetah since 2022. The success signals natural population establishment, though officials warn extreme heat & environmental pressures pose survival risks for the vulnerable cubs ahead. TNN

US-Iran direct talks begin in Pak amid disputes, distrust

Munir Receives Both Teams At Nur Khan Base

Islamabad: The United States and Iran began face-to-face negotiations Saturday in Pakistan, days after a fragile, two-week ceasefire was announced, as the war that has killed thousands of people and shaken global markets entered its seventh week.

The White House confirmed the direct nature of the talks, a rare instance of high-level US govt engagement with the Iranian govt.

Iran's state-run news agency said three-party talks including Pakistan had begun after Iranian preconditions, including a reduction in Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon, were met. "After Pakistan PM Shehbaz Sharif held separate meetings with delegations from US and Iran, formal round of direct negotiations between Iran and US has officially begun on Saturday evening," a senior official of the Shehbaz administration told PTI.

FULL COVERAGE
P 4, 10, Other Book, P 7

The US delegation led by vice-president JD Vance and the Iranian delegation led by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf were discussing how to advance the ceasefire already threatened by deep disagreements and Israel's continued attacks against the Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Vance, accompanied by special envoy Steve Witkoff and President Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, arrived in Islamabad hours after Qalibaf. Both delegations were received by Pakistan deputy PM Ishaq Dar and Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir at the Nur Khan airbase in Rawalpindi, which was damaged by Indian strikes during Operation Sindoor. The Iranians were dressed in black in mourning for Ayatollah Khamenei and others killed in war. AGENCIES

▶Contd on: Other Bk, P 7

NO LET-UP IN LEBANON, SOME IN HORMUZ

- **Israeli military says its air force hit more than 200 Hezbollah targets in Lebanon in past 24 hours** even as Trump claimed he had pressed on Israel to pull back
- **Three supertankers**, each capable of carrying 2 million barrels of oil, crossing Hormuz. This would mark Saturday as the **biggest day of oil exits through the Strait** since the war began
- **UK hints it is shelving plans to return the Chagos Islands**, which hosts Diego Garcia military base, to Mauritius after Trump strongly criticised the deal. Mauritius vows to 'spare no effort' to reclaim islands
- **UN agency chiefs demand an end to impunity for int'l law violations in West Asia**: 'Even wars have rules, and these rules must be respected'
- West Asia war has killed at least **3,000 people in Iran, 1,953 in Lebanon, and 23 in Israel**

Photo: IANS

US vice-president J D Vance with (L-R) Pak army chief Asim Munir, interior minister Mohsin Naqvi and deputy PM Ishaq Dar at Nur Khan

> **...Everyone knows they (Iran) are losing, and losing big.** The only thing they have going is the threat that a ship may 'bunk' into one of their sea mines... all 28 of their mine dropper boats are also lying at the bottom of the sea —President Trump

We have goodwill, but we **do not have trust** —Mohd Qalibaf | IRAN SPEAKER

We will negotiate with our finger on the trigger. While we are open to talks, we are also fully aware of the lack of trust... entering this process with maximum caution —Iranian govt

2 US warships transit in bid to 'clear' Strait

US has started "clearing out" Hormuz, Trump said and two US Navy warships transited the waterway at the start of an operation to clear mines placed by Iran, US CentCom said. A senior Iranian military official denied the report. Other Bk, P 7

Mojtaba has severe, disfiguring wounds?

Iran's new Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei's face was disfigured in the airstrike that killed his father at the beginning of the war and he suffered a significant injury to one or both legs, three people close to his inner circle told Reuters. Other Bk, P 7

US denies Iran's asset unfreezing claim

A senior Iranian source said Saturday the US had agreed to release Iranian frozen assets held in Qatar and other foreign banks, adding that it was directly linked to ensuring safe passage in Hormuz, but a US official swiftly denied the claim. Other Bk, P 7

PM writes to parties, seeks support on women's quota bills

New Delhi: PM Modi on Saturday reached out to floor leaders of all parties in both Houses, seeking their support for the unanimous passage next week of the women's reservation bills that aim to earmark a third of the seats in the Lok Sabha and assemblies from 2029, **report Sidhartha & Kumar Rakesh**.

"After extensive deliberations, we have reached the conclusion that the time has now come to implement the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam in its true spirit across the country. It is imperative that the 2029 Lok Sabha elections and assembly elections are conducted with women's reservations in place," Modi wrote, signalling his govt's intent to push for passage of the bills during the session starting April 16. "Your support... will be the fulfilment of an important responsibility towards the women of our country," PM wrote in the letter exclusively accessed by **TOI**.

ANI

PM Modi and leader of the oppn Rahul Gandhi chatted briefly at an event Saturday, and visuals of the exchange went viral | P 4

▶Contd on: Other Bk, P 6

NTCA order may stall push to alter Bhadra buffer

Bengaluru: Amid rising demands to shrink eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) and revise the notified buffer around Bhadra Tiger Reserve, a recent directive from National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has put Karnataka govt in a tight spot, **reports Niranjan Kaggere**.

The Jan 2026 directive effectively stalls legislators' push to alter the buffer, clarifying that the entire buffer around Bhadra must be treated as part of ESZ. After successfully persuading state govt to reduce the proposed ESZ from the default 10km to just 1km, several elected representatives from Chikkamagaluru met forest minister Eshwar Khandre during the recent budget session.

▶Cushion of 1km, P 3

B'luru-Mumbai VB sleeper train gets rlys' nod; full schedule soon

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Bengaluru: Train travel between Bengaluru and Mumbai is expected to be fast and more comfortable, with Indian Railways approving Vande Bharat sleeper service. The route, stops, travel time and launch date will be announced soon, sources said.

Railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw informed Bangalore Central MP PC Mohan in a letter about the approval for the new sleeper train. **TOI** reported on Jan 6 that the Railways was actively considering this proposal.

Udyan Express, introduced in 1983, is the main rail link between Mumbai and Bengaluru. Despite passage of time and tech upgrades, it still operates on relatively slow tracks, taking more than 22 hours to cover the 1,139-km distance. Journey by bus takes about 16 hours.

Sources said the planned new Vande Bharat service won't replace Udyan Express.

▶'Aim for 16-17hr travel', P 3

Net deletions due to SIR 5.2cr (10%) in 12 states/UTs; 2 crore included in Phase 2

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New Delhi: Over 2 crore voters were included across 12 states and Union territories (UTs) during Phase 2 of special intensive revision (SIR), bringing down the net deletions to nearly 5.2 crore, or 10.2% of their combined electorate of about 51 crore at the start of SIR on Oct 27, 2025.

Total deletions across Phase 2 states/UTs added up to 7.2 crore. However, 2 crore names were included as new voters (Form 6 by first-time voters) and existing electors enrolling at new addresses (Form 8).

As per data sourced from EC, over 6.5 crore absent, shifted, dead, doubly enrolled and 'other' electors were identified and dropped from rolls of A&N Islands, UP, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, TN, Goa, Puducherry, MP, Rajasthan, Kerala and Lakshadweep. Another 63.2 lakh names were deleted through Form 7 (objections to inclusion in roll) and adjudication (exclusive to Bengal where 27.2 lakh names were deleted by judicial officers).

▶Contd on: Other Bk, P 6

DANCE of DEMOCRACY

- **PM Narendra Modi frames assembly polls as a battle to protect Bengal's identity** and promises to **implement UCC** to end what he calls 'politics of appeasement'
- **Amit Shah appeals to Bengal's tribal communities to 'take revenge'** through votes for what he calls **insults to Prez Murmu** during her visit to the state last month
- **CM Mamata Banerjee alleges attempts to cancel her Bhowanipore nomination** through 'false affidavits'
- **'Not leaked from our system'**: CBFC rejects claims of online leak of Vijay's film 'Jana Nayagan', calls **allegations 'baseless and misleading'** P 6

Deletion fears spark migrants' exodus

Migrant workers from Bengal working in Delhi-NCR have sprinted back home ahead of the vote, either to help out kin whose names were deleted from rolls or driven by anxiety that a missed ballot will lead to names being struck off the roll. TNN

UP to drop forest cases against 4k Tharu tribals

UP govt has decided to withdraw forest crime cases against about 4,000 Tharu tribals. It comes after a **TOI** report detailed sweeping charges filed in 2012 by forest dept. The accused included the blind, the mentally and physically disabled and the dead. The cases were filed amid their struggle for rights in Dudhwa Tiger Reserve. P 4

TOI IMPACT

Why ₹100cr a day isn't fixing B'luru potholes

Karnataka govt and various public agencies are spending nearly Rs 100 crore every single day on Bengaluru, but most civic problems, including potholes, remain unresolved, **reports Hamsaveni N**. The estimate is based on an analysis by Janaagraha, a city-based not-for-profit focused on urban governance, that studied over 70 financial documents across 13 authorities for fiscal 2021-22. P 2

'PERFECT MISSION' TO MOON ENDS

- **Four astronauts of Nasa's Artemis-II mission** — Commander Reid Wiseman, pilot Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Canada's Jeremy Hansen — splashed down in the Pacific Ocean on Friday after a **historic journey to the Moon & back, first by humans in over 50 years**
- They completed a nearly **10-day voyage that took them 252,756 miles from home at their farthest distance from Earth.** During their lunar flyby mission, the 4 **flew 694,481 miles in total**
- **Nasa administrator** Jared Isaacman calls it 'a perfect mission... **just the beginning'**
- Nasa **aims to land humans on Moon.** Report: Other Bk, P 7

Indians hunger for untested Chinese weight-loss peptides

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It begins with an Instagram reel: an influencer touting the most potent weight-loss peptides. Two taps, and the feed is flooded with peptide-fuelled weight-loss journeys. Then the descent into rabbit hole begins: YouTube explainers, AI-simplified scientific papers, Reddit thread obsessions, private chat groups. It ends with a shipment from China of powdered weight-loss medication, unapproved, still in trials.

Hundreds across India rely on these imports, partly to beat the prices of doctor-prescribed medications like Mounjaro, which can cost Rs 16,000 for a month. Semaglutide (brand name Ozempic) has become cheaper, but even that is unlikely to dent the market for "Chinese peptides". What fuels it is people's desperate hunt for ways to delay weight-loss plateaus. Even the most potent GLP-1s only work up to a point, as the gut eventually adapts to the medication. Stopping them leads to gradual weight regain.

GOING US, UK WAY

- **Massive demand for weight-loss drugs** in India, where over 27m kids, adolescents expected to be obese by 2030
- **Hunt on for 'more effective', cheaper than GLP-1 alternatives**, even if they are still under trial. Dosage for 5 months cheaper than that of 1 month of GLP-1 drugs, said a buyer
- **Chinese peptide imports to US**, mainly Silicon Valley, **doubled** to $328m in 2025. **UK trend similar**

▶Reddit gateway, P 4

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San Francisco police arrest a 20-year-old suspect for allegedly throwing a Molotov cocktail at OpenAI CEO Sam Altman's home; later threatening to burn another building near company headquarters before being detained nearby shortly

Britain puts on hold plan to cede Chagos Islands to Mauritius after Donald Trump criticism; Prime Minister Keir Starmer seeks Washington's approval for sovereignty deal covering Diego Garcia base amid US concerns

New Zealand orders thousands to evacuate as Cyclone Vaianu threatens North Island; forecasters warn of coastal flooding, landslides, heavy rain and winds up to 130 kmh before storm tracks west, offshore, Monday

Former US vice president Kamala Harris signals potential 2028 White House bid at civil rights convention; tells Democratic audience she is considering another campaign, but stops short of formal announcement

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DOUBLE DELIGHT

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- PM writes to parties, seeks support on women's quota bills
- Singer Asha Bhosle, 92, in hospital due to chest infection

Karkala's Ayush one step from ending India's 61-yr wait for Asian title

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Udupi: History has already been made — but for badminton icon Ayush Shetty's family in Karkala, the bigger moment could just be hours away.

Ranked world No 25, Ayush overcame top seed and defending champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn from Thailand in a gripping three-game contest — winning 10-21, 21-19, 21-17 — to book a place in the Badminton Asia Championships final at Ningbo, China.

In the title tilt, the US Open Super 300 champion from India will face Chinese Shi Yu Qi.

Ayush is the first Indian men's singles player in 61 years to reach the final, after Dinesh Khanna's 1965 title win.

AFP

BADMINTON ASIA: Ayush will take on world champion Shi Yu Qi on Sunday, **P 8**

> This win matters a lot to us. We are on top of the world. We have been waiting for this day for a long time
> **Shalmili Shetty** | AYUSH'S MOTHER

Saturday's result has filled Ayush's family with pride — and raised hopes of an even greater finish Sunday.

While the semifinal triumph was special in itself, Shalmili Shetty, the badminton player's mother, empahasised its significance given the stature of his opponent and the stage. "We are now looking forward to the final," she said, as anticipation builds for what could be a title-clinching performance.

Despite the excitement, the family has been careful not to overwhelm Ayush with calls during the tournament.

Following his win on Saturday, he had briefly called his father, Ramprakash Shetty, to share the news, but the family avoided reaching out immediately.

"There is so much happening there. Ayush was busy with photo sessions and interviews," Shalmili explained.

"About an hour after the match, I spoke to him. He sounded very tired and was heading back to his room," she added.

Known for his composed demeanour, Ayush rarely lets emotions show during competitions. "He does not show too much excitement, especially when there is another match the next day. His real reactions come only after the tournament concludes," his mother noted.

Hailing from Sanoor near Karkala, Ayush began his badminton journey at the age of eight, inspired by his father, a businessman.

His mother is a homemaker.

Even today, both his parents admit they are often too nervous to watch his matches live.

As he prepares for the biggest match of his career so far, Ayush continues to train under coaches Vimal Kumar, Sagar Chopra and Irwansyah Adi Pratama — with one final step left in what has already been a dream run.

Cong minority wing chief quits over D'gere row

The aftermath of Davanagere South assembly bypoll has escalated into an internal crisis in Congress, with KPCC minority wing chief K Abdul Jabbar resigning amid allegations of anti-party activity involving him and minister B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan. The resignation follows an internal report that flagged factional fighting and poor coordination among minority members as factors that may have impacted performance. **P 3**

Schoolteacher held for raping minor student

A govt school teacher in his late 40s from Chitradurga district was arrested on Saturday for allegedly raping a 16-year-old girl inside a classroom and later getting her to undergo abortion at a private nursing home. The accused is identified as Rajanna, and police are looking for the woman doctor who conducted the abortion. **Other Bk, P 3**

HC strikes down 55-acre Hebbal land acquisition

Calls Process 'Monumental Fraud', Orders CBI Probe

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ZERO PROGRESS IN 22 YEARS

2002: Preliminary notification for acquisition of the land in Hebbal in North Bengaluru

2004: KIADB issued final notification

Jan 2011: Lakeview Tourism Corporation was incorporated

- Even 22 years after application, project never materialised; instead, **plan changed from an industrial project to a residential area**

YOU READ IT IN TOI

Metro seeks 45 acres of KIADB land at Hebbal to build transport hub

July 18, 2024

Double-decker flyover opens, Silk Board jn woes may ease

Bengaluru: Karnataka high court Friday struck down acquisition of 55 acres in Hebbal and Amanikere Hebbal villages in North Bengaluru terming the process a "monumental fraud" and ordered a CBI probe into the case.

Allowing a batch of appeals by landowners, a division bench of Justice D K Singh and Justice Tara Vitasta Ganju came down heavily on the nexus between officials and private entities, describing the acquisition as "a calculated conspiracy".

TOI had published a series of reports in recent months highlighting how rules were circumvented to allow prime land — which could have been used for setting up a multi-modal transport hub — in favour of a private entity, Lakeview Tourism Corporation, at a throwaway price.

"The entire exercise of acquiring the land for a nonexistent entity was nothing but a monumental fraud committed by the authorities in criminal conspiracy with the applicant and the directors of Lakeview Development Corporation, which was incorporated only in the year 2011. This was a fraud on (the) statute to deprive the landowners of their valuable property for a pittance," the bench noted.

On the CBI investigation, the bench said: "As the state instrumentality itself was involved in criminal conspiracy with private individuals, we need to get this matter investigated by an independent agency."

▶Contd on: Other Bk, P 2

HDK promises end to B'luru 'stagnation', slams Congress

With elections to GBA approaching, opposition JD(S) intensified its attack on Congress, with the party's state chief and Union minister **H D Kumaraswamy** seeking a fresh mandate and promising to end "stagnation" in Bengaluru. At a silver jubilee convention at Kommaghatta, he said flyovers, tunnel roads and Peripheral Ring Road proposed during his tenure as CM remain incomplete. He also cited his work on Namma Metro expansion and road widening, while accusing Congress of politicising demolitions in Kogilu and Thanisandra. JD(S) supremo H D Deve Gowda called Congress govt the "worst ever" and alleged misuse of Ahinda concept by CM Siddaramaiah. **Other Book, P 2**

K'taka drafts AI-focus digi-law to tighten social-media controls

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BILL PROPOSES

- **AI & deepfakes:** Mandatory labelling, penalties
- **Quick takedowns:** Gives 24-48 hour deadline
- **State regulator:** New oversight authority
- **User safeguards:** Faster grievance redressal, protections
- **Digital literacy:** Focus on awareness, prevention

Bengaluru: Karnataka's proposed digital safety law aims to tighten regulation of social media platforms with a focus on artificial intelligence (AI), faster content moderation and stronger user protections, according to a draft submitted to chief minister Siddaramaiah.

The draft bill signals a shift towards responsible digital citizenship in the AI era. "If everything goes to plan, it will be India's first state-level, AI-compliant, citizen-centric digital safety framework," said S Mohanadass Hegde, member, KSPPC.

A highlight of the bill is its focus on AI-generated content and deepfakes. It proposes mandatory labelling of such content, backed by clear legal definitions and penalties for misuse. The draft also introduces time-bound accountability, requiring platforms to act on harmful content within 24 to 48 hours, moving regulation from advisory to enforceable action.

Karnataka Responsible Social Media & Digital Safety Bill, 2026 was prepared by Karnataka State Policy and Planning Commission.

▶ Departure from IT Act, P 3

Ease of doing biz: K'taka cuts red tape, fast-tracks 2k projects in 4yrs

Bengaluru: Emphasising gains in ease of doing business, Karnataka govt has approved 2,028 investment projects worth Rs 5.1 lakh crore since 2022, with faster clearances and reduced delays, industries minister MB Patil said Saturday.

The projects are expected to generate 7.1 lakh jobs. Of this, Rs 69,564 crore has been realised, creating over 1 lakh jobs, indicating a section of the cleared investments has moved to execution. "Karnataka has fast-tracked approvals and cuts red tape drastically to create a healthier environment for investors," Patil said in a post on X.

He said quicker approvals are now reflecting on the ground. "Clear results of our govt's push to speed up approval processes are now evident."

▶Quicker decisions, P 3

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Govt spends ₹100cr+ on B'luru daily, so why aren't potholes being fixed?

Study Analyses 70 Docus Across 13 Authorities

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Bengaluru: Bengaluru is not just India's tech capital; it is also a city where public money flows at a staggering pace, often beyond the direct gaze of its citizens.

An eye-opening review by Janaagraha, a city-based not-for-profit focused on urban governance, has revealed that over Rs 100 crore is spent every single day on the city by the state govt and various public agencies. The estimate is based on an analysis of over 70 financial documents across 13 authorities for the financial year 2021-22.

In total, public spending on Bengaluru stood at a massive Rs 38,455 crore for the year, according to the report.

What stands out is not just the scale of spending, but how it is distributed. Only about 20% of the total expenditure is handled by the city's municipal body, the erstwhile BBMP, now under the GBA framework. The remaining 80% is controlled by parastatal agencies such as Bangalore Electricity Supply Company (Bescom), Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC), and city police.

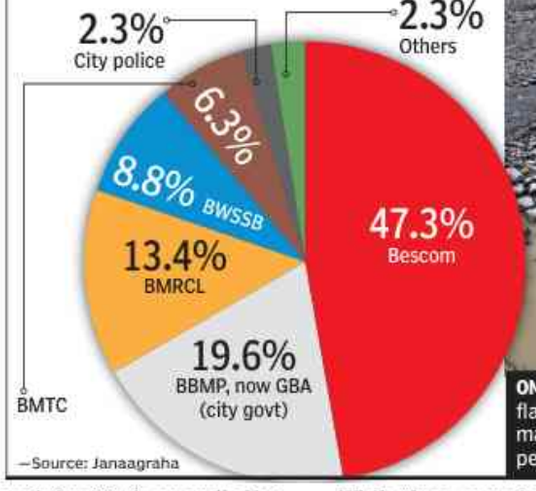
While these agencies account for the lion's share of public spending, they often operate outside robust public scrutiny, leading to gaps in transparency.

For residents, this disconnect is not abstract. It often translates into everyday civic issues, from potholed roads and traffic congestion to water shortages, even as thousands of crores are spent annually. Experts point out that without clear accountability, tracking outcomes on the ground becomes increasingly difficult.

The issue is further compounded by the absence of elected representatives in city governance since 2020, weakening direct public oversight over a significant portion of civic spending. The report also highlights that Bengaluru lacks a single, consolidated view of its public finances, making it difficult for both citizens and policymakers to understand how funds are allocated across sectors.

WHO SPENDS PUBLIC MONEY?

In principle, accountability for public spending should rest with the city govt — the only level of govt that residents directly elect. However, in Bengaluru, about 80% of the money and decision-making sits with unelected parastatals and state departments.



—Source: Janaagraha

TOI

ON THE GROUND: Janaagraha report flags a stark disconnect between massive public spending and persistent civic issues in Bengaluru

TRANSPARENCY CRISIS

Most public authorities in Bengaluru are not legally required to disclose how they spend public money. While the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) Act, 2024 mandates municipal corporations to publish financials, parastatals remain largely opaque. Currently, only three out of 12 (BDA, BWSSB, and BMRDA) are required to publish financial data under their own laws.

JANAAGRAHA'S SUGGESTIONS FOR FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY

- **Uniform rules:** Bring all of the Bengaluru public authorities under a single, common set of fiscal transparency rules
- **Centralised tracking:** Create a consolidated, city-level public spending dashboard for citizens
- **Granular data:** Implement 'radical transparency' by publishing project-level details and making data available by sector and ward in machine-readable formats

RWAs push for road-cut nod as war fuels GAIL demand

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Bengaluru: A surge in road-cutting requests — partly driven by the ongoing West Asia conflict — has placed officials of Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) in a challenging position, even as resident welfare associations (RWAs) continue to demand expedited completion of long-pending GAIL gas pipeline works.

During a citizen interaction held Saturday at HM Tambourine Apartments on Kanakapura Road, organised by the Residents' Welfare Associations Federation and Bengaluru South City Corporation, GBA officials disclosed that they have received 171 applications from apartment complexes and residents seeking permission for road cutting to facilitate GAIL gas connections.

Of these, 43 applications were rejected, while the others are still under review. Officials noted that several requests were denied because the affected road stretches fall within defect liability periods (DLP) or had been recently asphalted.

Officials indicated that a shortage of asphalting material, along with the need to safeguard newly laid roads, remains a key concern. However, RWAs have been urging faster approvals, pointing to persistent delays despite much of the piped infrastructure already being in place. Residents also noted that the ongoing West Asia conflict has intensified the situation by driving up costs and increasing demand for GAIL gas connections.

Photo for representation

ROADBLOCK: Officials say a shortage of asphalting material, along with the need to safeguard new roads, remains a key concern

> For the past seven years, pipeline infrastructure — including meters and internal connections — has been in place. However, the final link across the road remains pending due to the lack of road-cutting permission. Residents have already paid around Rs 5,500, yet continue to depend on LPG cylinders. Now, amid the ongoing conflict, we are even receiving messages asking us to surrender our connections, which has left us in a dilemma
> **GS Ramesh** | FORMER MEMBER, NAGARJUNA PREMIER APARTMENT OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, SARAKKI

> Although the entire infrastructure has been in place for the past three or four years, gas supply has not commenced due to the missing link across the road, which requires road-cutting permission. Adding to the confusion, LPG providers are asking residents to surrender cylinder connections under the assumption that PNG supply is already active. Meanwhile, cylinder prices have risen sharply, and with the ongoing tensions in West Asia, there is uncertainty over when they might ease
> **Abdul Aleem** | RESIDENT, HM TAMBOURINE APARTMENTS, KANAKAPURA ROAD

Authorities stated that while road-cutting permissions for GAIL and other utilities were earlier restricted due to recently asphalted roads, approvals are now being expedited. At the same time, the limited availability of asphalting material — linked to the ongoing conflict — is being taken into account in the decision-making process.

KN Ramesh, commissioner of South corporation, said: "The concern earlier was that repeated road cuts would damage the surface. However, we have now decided to clear such applications. We are granting a blanket approval in principle, subject to DLP requirements. Earlier, these applications were processed in a routine manner. Now, given the increased urgency and external factors, we are treating them as priority cases."

Residents also raised a range of civic and infrastructure concerns during the interaction, including damaged roads, disturbances caused by pubs, and illegal parking along Outer Ring Road.

Kumaraswamy promises to free city from 'stagnation'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: With the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) elections approaching, senior JD(S) functionaries sharpened their attack on the Congress govt, as party state president and Union minister HD Kumaraswamy sought a clear mandate, promising to free the state and Bengaluru from the "current stagnation".

Addressing party workers at Kommaghatta near Kengeri during the party's silver jubilee convention Saturday, Kumaraswamy said, "Give us one chance under my leadership, and I will free the state and Bengaluru from the current stagnation. I led coalition govts twice, but alliance considerations limited my ability to govern effectively. JD(S) is not just a rural party — it also works for urban areas, including Bengaluru."

At the JD(S) silver jubilee convention, former PM Deve Gowda criticised CM Siddaramaiah, alleging that he does not genuinely uphold the principles of social justice and uses Ahinda concept selectively for political gains

Positioning himself on Bengaluru's infrastructure push, he said key projects now being discussed were first proposed during his tenure nearly 15 years ago. "I had decided to build several flyovers and tunnel roads in Bengaluru. The Peripheral Ring Road project was also planned at a cost of Rs 3,000 crore. However, successive govts failed to complete these projects. Now, the state govt has started talking about tunnel roads and it looks like it won't happen anytime soon," Kumaraswamy said, urging Bengalureans to support JD(S) for the city's development. Recalling his tenure, he also said he prioritised Metro expansion and widened more than 56 roads.

Kumaraswamy also accused the Congress govt of demolishing houses in Kogilu and Thanisandra and using the issue for political gains. He asked party workers to dedicate at least one hour daily to strengthen the party at the grassroots, while leaving alliance calls to the leadership.

JD(S) supremo and former PM HD Deve Gowda, 93, also targeted the state govt, calling it the "worst ever", and predicted it may not last two more years. He urged chief minister Siddaramaiah to learn from Prime Minister Modi. "Modi invited us to join him, and I agreed after we faced repeated setbacks while being with Congress. Today, Kumaraswamy has been given an opportunity to serve as a Union minister," he said, calling on the party workers to unite behind the minister's leadership.

Traffic curbs on Banaswadi rd

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: In the backdrop of festive celebrations, including chariot pulling and Karaga at Anjaneyaswami temple at Dodda Banaswadi Main Road, traffic police have banned vehicular movement between Mukutamma temple bus stand and Steel Factory junction on the road from Sunday morning to Wednesday morning. Alternative routes have been arranged:

For vehicles travelling from Ramamurthy Nagar towards CBD: Take a right turn near Mukutamma Temple — reach Horamavu junction — left turn towards 100 Ft road — Vemanna Junction — right turn — Banaswadi Main Road.

For vehicles travelling towards Ramamurthy Nagar/KR Pura on Banaswadi Main Road: Vemanna Junction — right turn near Steel Factory — proceed on Bhuvanagiri Road, reach Ramamurthy Nagar ORR.

ALMANAC (12.4.2026)

Meena Masa 29 Shri Parabhava Nama Samvatsara – Uttarayana – Vasantha Ritu - Tithi: Chaitra Krishna Dasami h. 25-17 Nakshatra: Sravana h. 15-14 Yoga: Sadhya h. 18-16. 23 Shawwal. Kali Day 1872677
Rahu Kalam 4.30m — 6pm
— Vidya Shankara Somayaji

₹10L to be deposited in Army casualties fund

▶ Continued from page 1 (Other Book)

We cannot expect an impartial and independent investigation at the hands of the state agencies. Therefore, it is required that the matter should be investigated by an independent agency for proper, impartial, and unbiased investigation (into) this statutory and constitutional fraud," the court added.

In addition to quashing the acquisition by the state govt through KIADB, the bench imposed Rs 10 lakh as cost upon Lakeview Tourism Corporation, to be deposited in the Army Battle Casualties Welfare Fund.

In 2023, the state-level single-window clearance committee considered it to be a partnership firm of two real estate developers of the same promoters. The authorities have appeared to be "ever ready and willing" to oblige and accede to demand/request, "accepted the demand of the said

HEBBAL LAND

entity for change of the land use allotted to Lakeview Tourism Corporation for construction of a Unicare Tourism Centre with a resort and five-star hotel, amusement park, water park, health club, recreation facility, conference/convention centre with all ultra-modern facilities, the Indian arts and crafts exhibition, a mini-theatre, restaurants, modern shopping complex and service apartments".

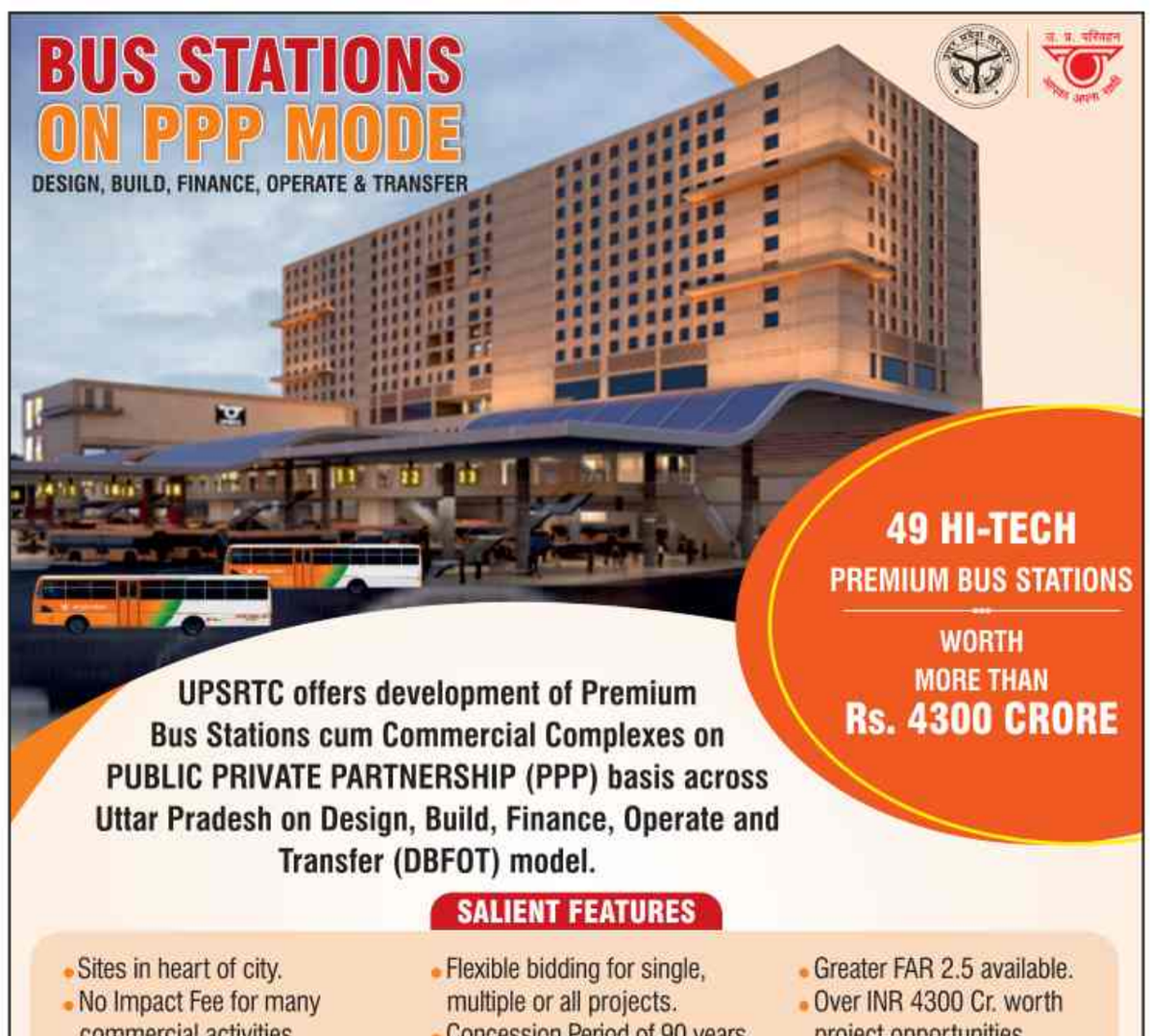
"Integrated township with development of commercial office spaces, information technology park etc," was now the objective, the bench pointed out in its order.

Contactless int'l travel trial @KIA

Bengaluru: Bangalore International Airport Ltd (BIAL), in partnership with IndiGo, Digi Yatra Foundation, and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), has successfully conducted technical trials for a contactless international travel system at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA).

The trials demonstrated an integrated passenger journey from ticketing and booking management to biometric-enabled airport processing. The initiative is part of IATA's global proof-of-concept programme to enable seamless international travel.

The system is built on a self-sovereign identity-based ecosystem using biometric technology, allowing secure and contactless passenger processing through app-to-app integration. Having already implemented Digi Yatra for domestic travel, KIA is now extending the technology to international passengers. The development marks a significant step towards large-scale deployment of biometric-enabled travel. TNN



UPSRTC offers development of Premium Bus Stations cum Commercial Complexes on PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (PPP) basis across Uttar Pradesh on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) model.

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The details of bus stations offered on PPP mode are provided in the Tender Documents. The tender documents are available on: **https://etender.up.nic.in**

BIDDING SCHEDULE

Date of publication of tender documents	12.04.2026 on https://etender.up.nic.in
Last date of receiving clarifications	Upto 15:00 hrs on 26.04.2026
Pre Bid Conference	27.04.2026 (at 11:00 hrs) at Conference Hall, Parivahan Bhawan, Tehri Kothi, Lucknow
Date of uploading of addendum/corrigendum, if any	02.05.2026 (upto 15:00 hrs) on https://etender.up.nic.in
Bid submission date & place (Application Due Date)	08.06.2026 (upto 15:00 hrs) on https://etender.up.nic.in
Opening of technical bid	08.06.2026 (16:00 hrs onwards)

:FOR ENQUIRY:
Dr. Bipin Kumar Mishra (AMD), MOB.: 8299607405
Mr Yajuvendra Kumar(GM-PPP), Mob.: 9219615066
E-mail: ppp@upsrtc.com

U.P. STATE ROAD TRANSPORT CORPORATION
Mahatma Gandhi Marg, Tehri Kothi, Lucknow - 226 001,
Phone: 0522-2274250, 2621737, Website: www.upsrtc.com

GBA rolls out pilot project TO BEAT THE HEAT

Nithya.Mandyam
@timesofindia.com

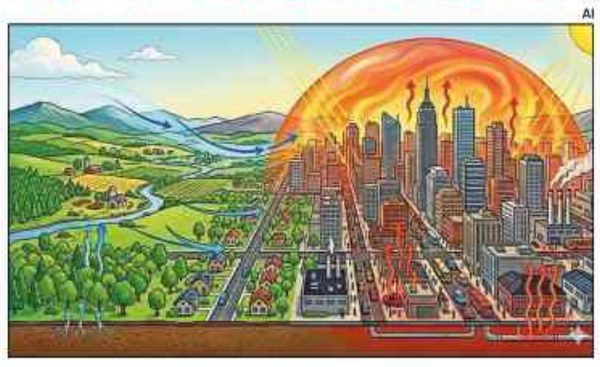
Bengaluru: The city's rapidly rising temperatures have pushed it to confront an uncomfortable reality — parts of its once-temperate landscape are turning into urban heat traps. Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has now launched the first phase of a city-wide, data-driven strategy to identify and mitigate urban heat islands, working with organisations such as Sensing Local and Hasiru Dala.

As part of this pilot, key hotspots, including Peenya Industrial Area and Hennur Bande in HBR Layout, have been identified. Based on the outcomes of this initial phase, the programme will be extended to other parts of the city.

Hennur Bande, once a stone quarry, has since been transformed into a 10-acre flat parcel surrounded by a 20-acre buffer zone. Authorities now plan to convert this underutilised land into a climate-responsive urban park aimed at improving air quality, enhancing green cover, and reducing localised temperatures.

"This initiative is part of the heat resilience programme under the C40 Cities mission. Bengaluru was selected among 33 other C40 Cities mission even before the formation of GBA, and two major heat islands were identified — Peenya Industrial Area and Hennur Bande," said

AI



Pommala Sunil Kumar, Bengaluru North City Corporation commissioner.

Originally, officials proposed developing a five-acre Miyawaki forest at the site. However, resistance from local residents, who wanted to retain open play areas, forced a redesign. "We have now created a plan to accommodate both the playground and the forest. Rs 20 crore has been allocated under the climate action wing," he said.

Hennur Bande in HBR Layout recorded a mean land surface temperature of 37°C during peak summer months (March-May 2024), according to satellite data, he added.

Rapid urbanisation has led to a surge in impermeable surfaces, intensifying the urban heat island (UHI) effect. Compounding the problem is a severe shortage of green space — just 1sqm per capita. The redevelopment aims to expand tree canopy cover, leveraging evapotranspiration and shading to create a cooler microclimate.

Over the past five years, Bengaluru's maximum temperatures have steadily increased. According to the Sensing Local and Hasiru Dala report, Bengaluru has witnessed a 1,078% increase in built-up area, alongside an 88% decline in vegetation and 79% reduction in waterbodies. The shift from porous landscapes to paved surfaces has disrupted the city's ecology, hydrology, and overall liveability.

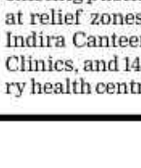
Difficulties at work

Outdoor workers, including construction labourers, pourakarmikas, street vendors, and traffic police, face heightened health risks and economic losses. "Over 73% of sanitation workers operate during peak heat hours, and 92% reported heat significantly affects their work, with women facing greater difficulty. Employees report difficulty breathing, dehydration, and fatigue," said Rajendra KV, Bengaluru West city corporation commissioner.

The administration is developing a network of cooling infrastructure. Two primary health centres in Heggana-halli and Tippenahalli are being upgraded into dedicated cooling centres, equipped with drinking water, shaded rest areas, and public awareness materials. Additionally, the city plans to repurpose existing public assets into heat relief zones, including 163 Indira Canteens, 109 Namma Clinics, and 143 urban primary health centres.

WHAT IS UHI EFFECT?

Urban Heat Islands (UHIs) refer to parts of a city that experience significantly higher temperatures than nearby rural areas.



Surfaces such as concrete and asphalt absorb and retain heat, while dense clusters of buildings restrict airflow and trap warmth. The lack of vegetation reduces natural cooling, intensifying heat within these urban pockets.

RISING TEMPERATURES

March high: 36.1°C (2020) — 36.6°C (2024)
April high: 36.4°C (2020) — 37.6°C (2024)
May trend: 16°C (1970s) — 34°C (2025)

MAJOR HOTSPOTS

Peenya Industrial Estate: Industrial infrastructure, corrugated roofing, dense built-up area
Nagawara: Rapid urbanisation, mixed land use patterns
HBR Layout: High density, transit intersections, reduced green cover

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tender & notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby given notice that our client is intending to purchase the schedule Property from its present owners **Mrs. Poonam Anand Rishi** W/o. Bikramjit Singh Rishi and Mr. Bikramjit Singh Rishi,, Residing at 172/1, Versova Layout,Kaggadasapura Main Road, C.V. Raman Nagar, Bengaluru – 560 093. In the event any one has any objection or claim over the Schedule Property they may file the same with documentary proof before the under signed within **15 days** from the date of this notice failing which our client shall proceed with the transaction as if no such claim or objection subsists.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of Immovable Property bearing Flat No. 051, Khatha No. 17/1-8, Millers Road (Cantonment Railway Station and St. John Church Rroad) Jayamahal, Bangalore-560 046, with a built-up area of 2850 square feet, situated at Fifth Floor of the multi-storied Apartment Residential Building known and called as **"Gold Opus"** within New ward no 63 (old Ward No. 92) of BBMP, having BBMP Khatha of "A" category and presently having E-Swathu Khatha with **E.P.I.D No.6501390474,** with one covered car parking space in the basement floor and one uncovered car parking space in the ground floor open space, both specifically earmarked, together with an undivided share in the landed property to an extent of 6.76 % (six point seven, six percent) equivalent to 982.36 square feet together with all rights and appurtenances whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface thereon, constructed on the property bearing Corporation No. 17/1, Millers Road, Jayamahal, Bangalore-560 046, New ward no 63 (old Ward No. 92) of BBMP and bounded as follows: **East by:** Private Property bearing No.17, Millers Road; **West by:** United Theological College and A.C.Jiaraz Bhoys's Building; **North by:** Winsor Court Apartments, and; **South by:** Millers Road.

Sd/- Mr. P. Usman, Advocate, Usman Law Chambers, No.46, Sadath Center, 2nd Floor, Nandidurga Road Bengaluru-560046. **Mob: 9740085683**

real estate

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BANASHANKARI 6th Stage 2nd Block 50x80, 80 feet Road , very Good Location, 30x40 East Facing near 80 feet Road, Call :- 9845755185 / 9632786281.

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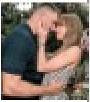

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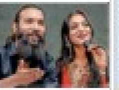

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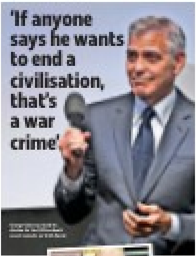

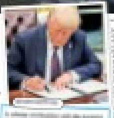

Quenching thirst: Dept on repair spree for 3.3k purifiers

19k+ Water Purification Units In State

Nithya.Mandyam
@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: With one in six rural drinking water purification units in Karnataka currently non-functional, the rural development and panchayat raj department has decided to go on a repair drive this summer by addressing gaps in maintenance and ensuring proper allocation of funds across districts.

Of the 19,638 units installed statewide, 3,380 are under repair, leaving about 17% of the infrastructure temporarily defunct. While the overall functionality rate stands at 83%, the distribution is far from uniform, with several districts — particularly in North Karnataka — witnessing acute disruptions.

Kalaburagi and Yadgir are at the bottom, with nearly half the units under repair. Koppal, Gadag, and Vijayapura also report high levels of disruption, raising concerns over access to safe drinking water in already water-stressed regions. In contrast, districts such as Shivamogga, Hassan, Udupi, and Bengaluru Rural report better functionality, indicating relatively stronger maintenance systems.

A key concern flagged by officials is the mismatch between repair needs and funds released. Vijayapura, for instance, has 250 units under repair but has received just Rs 10 lakh, while Gadag, with 193 defunct units, has been allocated Rs 62 lakh. On the other hand, Kalaburagi and Koppal — among the worst affected — have received relatively higher allocations of Rs 179 lakh and Rs 140 lakh, respectively.

File photo

STATE OF PURE WATER UNITS

District	RO plants	Functional	Under repair	Funds disbursed (in ₹ lakh)
Chitradurga	1,056	772	284	46
Koppal	674	393	281	140
Vijayapura	846	596	250	10
Kalaburagi	510	272	238	179
Yadgir	471	252	219	123.5
Bidar	391	191	200	6
Gadag	439	246	193	62
Bagalkot	780	592	188	55
Dharwad	467	317	150	48

— Source: RDPR department

A key concern flagged by officials is the mismatch between repair needs and funds released. Vijayapura, for instance, has 250 units under repair but has received just Rs 10 lakh, while Gadag, with 193 defunct units, has been allocated Rs 62 lakh

> Water is supplied at Rs 5 for 20 litres, and typically one RO plant caters to 3-4 gram panchayats. One GP has 3-4 villages, having a minimum of one RO unit in each village
> **Lavish Ordia** | CEO OF YADGIR ZILLA PANCHAYAT

Lavish Ordia, CEO of Yadgir zilla panchayat, said most reverse osmosis (RO) plants in the district were set up between 2012 and 2017, and later handed over to gram panchayats for operations and maintenance (O&M). "Water is supplied at Rs 5 for 20 litres, and typically one RO plant caters to 3-4 gram panchayats. One GP has 3-4 villages, having a minimum of one RO unit in each village," he said. He added the annual O&M cost of each unit is around Rs 1.5 lakh, covering electricity and membrane cleaning and replacement, but returns remain low. "Each unit earns barely Rs 100-200 a day, making it financially unviable," Ordia said.

Usage-disrepair link

He pointed out that low usage is a key reason many units have fallen into disrepair. "Most households prefer borewell water, which they find sweeter. Even when RO water is provided for free, uptake is poor," he said, adding that vandalism — such as coins in boxes being tampered with or stolen — has further compounded the problem.

In Bagalkot, which has 780 RO units, 188 are currently under repair, with Rs 55 lakh allocated by the govt so far. Shashidhar Kurer, CEO of Bagalkot ZP, said, "There are three main challenges in rural areas when it comes to maintaining these RO units — dried-up plants, unused units, and poor management by agencies. In many cases, the RO plants have become defunct because of a lack of proper O&M by gram panchayats. Some units that remain idle are being considered for relocation to areas where they can be better utilised." Kurer added he has sought Rs 4.4 crore for repair and maintenance of the 188 units, and expressed confidence the issue can be resolved once funds are sanctioned.

The data reflects a broader regional pattern, with southern and coastal districts performing better, while northern districts — grappling with groundwater contamination and harsher climatic conditions — face higher breakdown rates. With summer intensifying and rural water demand rising, officials say urgent repairs and a need-based funding model are critical to preventing further slippages.

RDPR minister Priyank Kharge recently reviewed the situation and issued directions to address the matter. He stated pure water units requiring repairs must be taken up on priority this year. Highlighting systemic issues, he noted that many units have dried up because of a lack of water sources and poor maintenance. He directed officials to examine the feasibility of repairs, prepare a detailed blueprint, and submit assessments before taking up restoration work.

Teacher rapes girl & takes her to pvt clinic for abortion, arrested

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

A govt school teacher in his late 40s from Chitradurga district was arrested Saturday for allegedly raping a 16-year-old girl inside a classroom and later getting her to undergo abortion at a private nursing home.

The accused is identified as Rajanna, and police are looking for the doctor who did the abortion. The incident came to light when a few members of the child welfare committee visited the school recently and students tipped them off.

Later, the committee members interacted with the survivor, who disclosed that Rajanna had threatened her. "When Rajanna came to know that the survivor was pregnant, he took her to the private nursing home and had the abortion done. The girl, out of fear, had not told anything to her parents. However, a few of her classmates came forward before the committee members and exposed Rajanna's heinous act," the cop said.

A committee member filed the complaint. "Rajanna and the woman doctor vanished, switching off mobile phones. However, we managed to secure Rajanna," the officer said.

Keep radial cushion of 1km from tiger habitat where buffer absent: NTCA

▶ Continued from page 1

They renewed demands to modify the buffer area by excluding human habitations and private land parcels. If approved, this would have made Bhadra one of the first tiger reserves in the country to alter an already notified buffer zone.

Before the state could act, NTCA reiterated its position in clear terms: "The entire buffer zone should be included in the Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ). A radial cushion of minimum one kilometre should be kept from the critical tiger habitat wherever the buffer is disjunct or absent. Wherever the protected area forms part of the buffer, then a minimum of one kilometre cushion should be demarcated around the said buffer also."

Forest department officials pointed out that the original argument for reducing the ESZ — from 10 km to 1 km — was based on the presence of villages and concerns over development restrictions.

"Interestingly, the buffer area, notified in 2011, around Bhadra also includes around 50-54 villages, making it difficult to justify similar relaxations now in light of the latest NTCA directive. If the govt is still willing to pursue the matter, then Bhadra will be one of the first tiger reserves in South India to alter its notified buffer area," a forest official said, requesting anonymity.

Push to revise buffer is aimed at facilitating luxury resorts: Wildlife activists

Referring to the NTCA guidelines, the officer added, "The state govt can consider revision of ESZ boundary while making a recommendation. With the latest guidelines, it cannot modify the buffer as it will be deemed to be considered as ESZ and there is no scope for further reduction in the area."

Conservation experts cautioned that any move to alter the notified buffer would require clearance from higher authorities such as National Board for Wildlife and possibly even the Supreme Court of India. They stressed that buffer zones are meant to promote coexistence between humans and wildlife, making it unlikely that apex bodies would permit reductions merely to exclude select villages.

Wildlife activists also alleged that the push to revise the buffer is aimed at facilitating luxury resorts by politically connected individuals from Karnataka and neighbouring Telangana, adding that complaints have already been submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Woman accuses ex-corporator of abuse, attempts to kill herself

Bengaluru: Accusing a former city corporator of harassing her, a 33-year-old woman attempted suicide at her Jakkur residence near Yelahanka Friday morning. She was rushed to a govt hospital, but her condition is critical.

Her suicide note, which was torn as the woman held it in her hand, was recovered from the scene. "In the note, the woman wrote the former corporator's name and details of his harassment. The woman consumed cockroach spray," police said, adding they were waiting for her husband, who is an auto driver, to file the complaint. TNN

Youth Congress functionary, 27, stabbed to death

A Congress party functionary was allegedly murdered at his residence in Hashmi Nagar, Malapur, Dharwad, Friday night. The deceased is Youth Congress secretary Firoz Pathan, 27.

Police said a gang of 3-4 persons barged into the house, chased him and allegedly stabbed him with a knife multiple times. According to sources, Pathan's family who came to intervene were also attacked. The assailants then fled. He had been preparing for his wedding on April 26.

The exact reason for the murder is not known yet. Police commissioner N Shashikumar Shashikumar said a comprehensive investigation will be conducted in the case. "There are witnesses. His family members have also seen the assailants. We have got a clue about them. We will soon arrest the culprits," the top cop added. Union minister Pralhad Joshi told reporters that law and order is a serious problem as it has collapsed in the state. TNN

'VB service should aim for 16-17 hr travel time'

▶ Continued from page 1

Sources in Central Railway told **TOI** the new train Vande Bharat service is likely to run via Pune, Solapur, Kalaburagi, Raichur and Guntakal, the route taken by Udyan Express.

Vande Bharat is already operational between Mumbai and Solapur. There will be no technical constraints to run a sleeper service, sources added.

Mohan told **TOI** people travelling between the two cities had, for long, been demanding a faster and more convenient train service. Welcoming the announcement, many commuters have enquired about stops and whether the train will run via Kalaburagi or Hubballi.

Trade activist Sajjan Raj Mehta said, "It's a welcome move. In the absence of a superfast train, many travellers have to rely on buses or expensive air travel. Bus journeys take 14-15 hours. The new train service should aim to keep travel time within 16 to 17 hours for the larger benefit of passengers."

Man, who set garbage on fire & killed 5 cows in shed, nabbed

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Police arrested a 49-year-old man for allegedly setting a cowshed in DJ Halli, eastern part of city on fire, resulting in the death of five cows on the intervening night of April 6 and April 7.

Accused is **Mohammed Imran**, resident of KG Halli and a daily wage worker. "Roaming around KG Halli and DJ Halli areas at night, Imran would set garbage heaps on fire whenever and wherever he sees them," an officer said.

However, the fire Imran set on the particular night extended to a cowshed and two furniture shops, charring five cows to death and injuring three. Also, one mini-goods vehicle and four two-wheelers were also partially gutted. A complaint was filed by the owner of the cows, Srinivas. Scoring on digital evidence and information from local residents, cops arrested Imran. "He claims it was not an intentional act and he never intended to kill the cows. We told him that it was a callous act that ended on a sad note," a police officer said.

Court: Pigmy agents are not business facilitators

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Pigmy agents employed by regional rural banks are not intermediaries appointed under the Reserve Bank of India-sanctioned model and hence cannot be called business facilitators, the high court has ruled.

"Their role is confined to the collection of deposits under the bank's pigmy deposit scheme, and they do not undertake activities envisaged under the business facilitator. The attempt to artificially transpose pigmy agents into the category of business facilitators is, therefore, fundamentally flawed. It is a mischaracterisation that cannot withstand judicial scrutiny," Justice M Nagaprasanna pointed out in his recent order while allowing a petition filed by the Karnataka Vikas Grameen Bank, Belagavi.

The petitioner challenged the various show-cause notices/notices issued by the GST authorities to verify the tax compliance by the bank. The GST authorities issued notices seeking the payment of tax on commission amounts paid to the pigmy agents in urban branches.

The bank argued that pigmy agents are basically its employees and not business facilitators.

Justice Nagaprasanna noted that the agreement governing the engagement of the pigmy agents reveals several telling features.

The bank exercises pervasive control over their functioning, and the agents are required to maintain security deposits. They are assured minimum remuneration; they are entitled to benefits such as gratuity, and their disengagement is regulated by notice requirements. These are not indications of an independent contractor but hallmarks of employment, the judge pointed out.

Such services, being in the course of employment, are insulated from the levy of GST. "The show-cause notices issued by the respondent proceed on an erroneous premise, making an attempt to describe the pigmy agents as business facilitators. The foundation of the show-cause notice is itself infirm; the superstructure in the form of the show-cause notice, built upon it, would tumble down," he observed.

Interfaith couple allege threat from family, seek police protection

An interfaith couple from the district has sought police protection, alleging threats and pressure from their families following their recent wedding.

Keshav, a resident of Hulihaider village in Kanakagiri taluk, and Tasleema from Sulekal village in Gangavathi taluk, fell in love after meeting during commute to their college. The couple recently solemnised their marriage at the Lakshmi temple in Kanakagiri. While they maintain that the decision was mutual, they claim to be living in fear — Tasleema's family is reportedly pressuring her to marry another person.

Amid rising concerns, the couple, accompanied by a lawyer, approached the SP office Saturday seeking protection, citing a threat to their lives. "We stand by our decision. We have not harmed anyone. We only want to live peacefully," they said. TNN

Police reunite two missing children with families

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Staff from a Hoysala police patrol vehicle rescued two missing children, including a specially abled boy, and safely reunited them with their families in separate incidents reported under KR Pura and Ramamurthynagar police jurisdictions.

At 10.40pm on April 6, residents of Dodda Banasawadi alerted police control room after noticing a young boy wandering alone near Annamma Temple. ASI Manjunath and head constable Niranjan from Hoysala-54 promptly reached the spot. The boy, believed to be over 10 years old, was unable to speak. Suspecting that he may have wandered away from home unnoticed, the officers immediately sought assistance from another patrol unit, Hoysala-53. After about 30 minutes of questioning, some residents recognised the child and contacted his parents. The officers guided them to a designated spot, where the child was safely reunited with his family.

In another incident reported from KR Pura on the afternoon of April 7, police faced a more challenging situation involving a missing three-year-old boy. ASI Nagaraj and constable Chandrashekhar received a call at 2.10pm informing them that the child had been found alone near a supermarket.

Police used the patrol vehicle's loudspeaker system to announce that the child had been found, along with his name and within 20 minutes, they were able to locate the parents.

Man gets 20-yr RI for rape of minor

In a case where a minor girl was kidnapped under the pretext of love and sexually assaulted, a Pocso court found the accused, Mahesh Madara, a 20-year-old resident of Hole Munnuru, Gadag district, guilty and sentenced him to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment.

Mahesh was the survivor's neighbour. They became acquainted and fell in love. On May 19, 2025, he took her to a place on the city outskirts, and he sexually assaulted. The next day, they went to Ballari and stayed in an abandoned house, where he sexually assaulted her multiple times. Based on a complaint, Mangaluru South police registered a case, and both of them were traced. TNN

BMTC driver, mechanic die in road accidents

Bengaluru: Two men, including a 55-year-old BMTC driver, died in two separate road crashes in the city since Friday night.

The first accident was reported around 9pm when P Shivanna, a BMTC driver, fell from his tractor and succumbed. Attached to Uttarahalli BMTC depot, Shivanna owned the tractor and drove it in his spare time. "On Friday night, his friend Venkatesh was driving the tractor and Shivanna was sitting on an adjacent seat. Suddenly, Shivanna lost balance and fell. Sustaining head injuries, he succumbed later. Venkatesh was booked for causing death due to negligence," an investigating officer said.

The second accident was reported around 10.30pm when a speeding mini-goods vehicle rammed into a motorbike on City Market flyover, killing its rider on the spot. The deceased was identified as Ravi Kumar, a resident of Sudhamanagar.

A mechanic by profession, Kumar was riding towards Townhall when the goods vehicle rear-ended his motorbike, police said.

The driver fled the scene, leaving the vehicle behind. TNN

B'luru goes bananas as neighbouring crops wither

Jahnavi@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: Weather events in Tamil Nadu have caused the prices of bananas to crash in Bengaluru!

The extreme heat in Mettur in Tamil Nadu, which was preceded by gusty winds, has led to a glut of unripe, lower-quality bananas in Bengaluru markets, leading to a drop of at least Rs 15 per kg across two different varieties of bananas.

Pic for representation

DIP IN SALES: Bananas have also become cheaper as exports to West Asia have taken a hit due to the ongoing conflict

PRICES CRASH

The yelakki banana, which was selling at Rs 60-65 per kg, is now selling at anywhere between Rs 15-40 per kg, while the robusta variety, which was selling at Rs 20-25 per kg just a month ago, is now selling at Rs 7-10 per kg in banana mandi in Binny Mill and KR Market. "The prices started crashing after Ramzan as the demand reduced and the supply started increasing," said Ayyub, a banana trader from the Binny Mill mandi.

KG Purushotham, president, Banana Fruits Merchants' Association, said: "We are not seeing a lot of bananas from Karnataka as of now. A majority of them have come in from Mettur. The heavy winds and the heat there made the fruits drop from the plants before harvest season. To prevent further losses, farmers also pre-emptively started harvesting bananas that were just 40-60% ripe. The inflow of such bananas has created a glut in the market, and that, coupled with lack of quality, has led to a price crash."

Senthil Kumar, a banana trader from KR Market, added, "The farmers from Tamil Nadu wanted to empty their trucks in which they brought the fruits. They did not care about the price and sold them at very cheap prices. Naturally, the prices across the market also fell because of that."

Like many other commodities, bananas have also become cheaper as exports to West Asia have taken a hit due to the ongoing conflict. "The bananas from Gundlupet and Kollegala were going to Kerala and then exported to Arab countries. Now, even those bananas are stuck in local markets only," Purushotham said.

By June-July, the prices are expected to climb back up as the supply from Mettur will stop, and good-quality fruits start arriving in the market from within the state. "Yelakki variety especially will start going up in a month's time and just when the prices begin to stabilise, we will see the festive season, which can spike up the prices," Senthil said.

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Bypoll triggers rift, Cong minority chief resigns

Zameer Ahmed And Naseer Next In Line Of Fire?

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The aftermath of the Davanagere South assembly bypoll has escalated into an internal crisis in Congress, with KPCC minority wing president K Abdul Jabbar resigning amid allegations of anti-party activity involving him and minister BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan.

Jabbar's resignation follows an internal report by AICC in-charge secretary Abhishek Dutt, which flagged factional fighting and poor coordination among minority functionaries as factors that may have impacted the party's performance. The report has been submitted to the party high command, triggering discussions on possible action.

Zameer is also under scrutiny, with several MLAs reportedly accusing him of non-cooperation during the campaigning. A section within the party has alleged that both Zameer and Jabbar stayed away from early campaigning, with the minister joining only in the final phase, a move said to have failed in reassuring minority voters.

Jabbar, who is a member of the legislative council, however, said his resignation

> Congress is a party that works inclusively, but recent developments have left Muslims distressed and disappointed not just in Davanagere but across the state. Under such circumstances, it is not appropriate for me to continue in the post (of KPCC minority president)
> **Abdul Jabbar** MLC

was not linked to the internal report but stemmed from being sidelined during the campaign. He said he resigned on April 3 and questioned the circumstances around the resignation letter becoming public now.

Some party functionaries have also raised concerns over the timing of the letter surfacing, suggesting it may have been withheld during the campaign period.

In his resignation letter to KPCC president DK Shivakumar, Jabbar said the decision was driven by dissatisfaction among minorities following developments during the bypoll. He alleged that key discussions were held without his involvement despite his support for the party's victory. He also raised concerns over the ticket allotment, claiming internal suggestions were ignored, including proposals to give opportunities to other communities.

Rejecting speculation of personal ambition, Jabbar said he had never sought a ministerial post and that the demand was only for fair representation of minorities. He alleged that remarks against Zameer by Davanagere district in-charge minister SS Mallikarjun and others had hurt sentiments within the minority community. He said no disciplinary action had been taken or an apology issued by the party so far.

Party insiders said Naseer Ahmed, a political secretary to CM Siddaramaiah, who was also accused of anti-party activity, has been asked to resign by the party high command and may do so anytime. Zameer is also expected to face the axe in the next cabinet reshuffle, they added. A report has also been submitted against the trio, stating that they did not toe the party line and did not actively participate in the recent bypoll campaigning.

Jan Aushadhi to expand via post office network?

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: BJP MP **Lahar Singh Siroya** has pitched the use of the department of posts network to expand Jan Aushadhi Kendras to remote areas, with the Centre initiating an examination of the proposal.

Singh said he had raised the issue in Parliament and later met Union communications minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, urging him to explore the idea. In a letter to the MP, Scindia said the department had examined the suggestion and found merit in leveraging post office infrastructure and India Post's last-mile delivery network for transportation and doorstep delivery of medicines.

"The proposal has significant potential to enhance access to affordable medicines, particularly in rural and remote areas," the minister said, adding that the matter has been referred to the department of pharmaceuticals to examine feasibility. "Further action will be taken after due consultation to ensure effective and seamless implementation," the letter added.

Jan Aushadhi Kendras provide affordable generic medicines under a govt scheme aimed at improving access to low-cost drugs.

Awareness drive from today

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Union minister Shobha Karandlaje Saturday announced a 10-day statewide awareness campaign on women's rights in the backdrop of the Nari Shakti Vandan Bill.

WOMEN'S QUOTA

She said the campaign aims to educate women ahead of a proposed Parliament session to discuss the implementation of women's reservation. Karandlaje expressed hope that more women experts would be identified and fielded in elections.

She sought clarity from Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on his party's stand. BJP state Mahila Morcha president C Manjula said conventions, signature drives and rallies will be held across districts, beginning at KR Pura Sunday.

Trust in newspapers remains strong: CM

VALID POINT: CM Siddaramaiah at the 40th state conference of journalists in Bidar Saturday

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chief minister Siddaramaiah Saturday said public trust in newspapers remains intact, even as he urged journalists to uphold constitutional values and avoid speculative reporting.

Addressing the 40th State Journalists' Conference in Bidar, he said people continue to rely on newspapers for credible information and added that he personally shares that trust. He cautioned against sensationalism, stating that excessive focus on trivial issues could harm society.

"Speculative journalism is extremely dangerous... What benefit does society get if a husband-wife quarrel is shown all day?" he said. Recalling that BR Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi were journalists, he urged the media to act as a voice for the voiceless and promote social awareness.

Govt focusing on quicker decisions: Min

▶ Continued from page 1

The proposed Karnataka Digital Safety & Social Media Regu"Not only have investment agreements been secured, but effective implementation is also under way," Patil claimed.

The minister said a sustained focus on ease-of-doing business is helping improve investor confidence and attract fresh investments.

Patil said 18 key approvals have been overhauled. Land-use clearance time has been reduced from 120 days to 45 days, while fire NOC approvals have been cut from 60 days to 21 days. Factory plan approvals now take 14 days instead of 30, and electrical approvals are issued within 10 days. "We have overhauled key approvals... aligning departments and districts for on-ground delivery," Patil said.

ON FAST TRACK

- 2028 projects
- ₹5.1L cr investment
- 18 key approvals overhauled
- 7.1L new jobs

> Land-use clearance timelines have been reduced from 120 days to 45, while fire NOC approvals brought down from 60 days to 21. Factory plan approvals will be processed in 14 days. The state is focusing on quicker decisions and fewer procedural hurdles to strengthen a pro-industry ecosystem
> **MB Patil** | INDUSTRIES MINISTER

He added that the state is focusing on quicker decisions and fewer procedural hurdles to strengthen a pro-industry ecosystem and ensure that approved projects translate into investments and jobs.

Officials added the govt has aligned departments and districts to ensure faster processing and execution. Reforms in approval systems have been aimed at reducing delays and removing bottlenecks that previously slowed investments.

Draft marks departure from IT Act, other central laws

▶ Continued from page 1

The Karnataka Responsible Social Media & Digital Safety Bill, 2026 will be vetted by the state legal department before being considered for introduction in the monsoon session of the state legislature in June-July.

The draft marks a departure from existing central laws such as the Information Technology Act, 2000, and IT Rules, 2021, by proposing a state-level regulatory framework and citizen-focused safeguards.

Centre's Information Technology Act, 2000, provides the legal framework for digital transactions in India and defines cyber offences and penalties, while Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, build on this by requiring online platforms to follow due diligence, remove unlawful content promptly, and ensure accountability through compliance measures.

> **The proposed law guarantees the right to report harmful content, access time-bound grievance redressal and seek protection against harassment and misinformation**

The proposed Karnataka Digital Safety & Social Media Regulatory Authority will oversee compliance and respond to emerging digital risks.

"A localised authority can respond faster to emerging digital threats and region-specific issues," Hegde further explained.

For users, it guarantees the right to report harmful content, access time-bound grievance redressal and seek protection against harassment and misinformation.

Education Holds key

The proposal also emphasises prevention through education. It proposes a digital awareness and media literacy programme that aims to promote fact-checking, critical thinking and responsible online behaviour.

"This is a preventive approach—educating users rather than only punishing violations," noted a member of the team that prepared the draft.

Experts say this positions Karnataka as a potential pioneer in decentralised digital governance, providing a model for other states to follow.

Girl's body sent to Kerala after waterfall death

Chikkamagaluru: The mortal remains of **Sreenandhana**, who was found dead near Manikyadhara waterfalls here, were sent to her hometown in Kerala early on Saturday.

Sreenandhana, who was with her family members on a trip to Chikkamagaluru, went missing on April 7. The girl was found dead near the waterfalls Friday noon.

The body was shifted to Araluguppe Mallegowda District Hospital and a postmortem was conducted. Later, the body was handed over to the family members, who shifted it to Palakkad in Kerala. They said the final rites were performed in Thiruvilwamala Saturday. TNN

S'mogga zoo fears loss of hippo's unborn calf

Udaya Sagar | TNN

Shivamogga: Weeks after a young intern veterinarian was killed by a hippo, fresh concerns have emerged at the Shivamogga zoo, with indications that the pregnant animal may have lost her unborn calf.

REPORTS AWAITED

While there is no official confirmation yet, experts brought in from Bannerghatta Biological Park and Mysuru zoo have carried out an initial assessment, pointing to a possible loss of the calf in the womb.

Zoo director VM Amarakshar said the hippo's gestation period has ended and samples have been collected for tests. "We will follow the instructions of the doctors," he pointed out.

Specialists have taken body fluid samples to determine the next course of action. Officials said surgery is difficult due to the thickness of a hippo's skin, and decisions will depend on lab reports.

"If the calf has indeed died, they will likely use medical prescriptions to trigger a natural process for the body to expel the remains," Amarakshar said. The development comes in the backdrop of the death of intern veterinarian Sameeksha Reddy, who was attacked by the same hippo three weeks ago.

> **Officials said the hippopotamus is under observation, though pregnancy status has not yet been confirmed. The development comes in the wake of the death of veterinarian Sameeksha Reddy, who was attacked by the same animal three weeks ago**

The situation is concerning as the hippo, Hamsini, has a history of losing calves. One of its earlier calves had died due to aggression from a male hippo.

Officials said the animal is under close watch, but its current pregnancy status can only be confirmed after detailed medical reports. The situation is also compounded by a staffing gap, as the govt recently relieved zoo veterinarian Murali Manohar.

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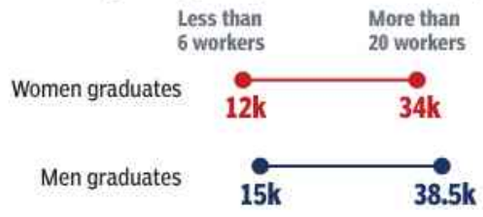
STATOISTICS A slice of life in numbers

Same qualification, very different pay

Urban graduate earnings in regular salaried work depend heavily on how many employees there are in a company – the more the number, the more the salary

Median monthly earnings in regular salaried work (Rs)



Urban graduate women and men in regular salaried work, by firm size. Source: PLFS 2024

In another big Bengal transfer, EC shifts 3 joint CPs, 5 DCPs

59 Shunted In Latest Case, Total Tops 540

Dwaipayan Ghosh, Kaushik Pradhan & Debashis Konar | TNN

ANI

Paramilitary forces in Kolkata's Rashbehari constituency on Saturday

Kolkata: In its ninth mass transfer order, involving 59 officers, Election Commission on Saturday transferred Kolkata's joint commissioners (crime, headquarters and intelligence), along with five DCPs — including DCP (South) — and six OCs.

Such mass transfers — 542 officers have been moved since March 16 — had never happened in Bengal during any general election.

The transfers come against the backdrop of the April 2 BJP-Trinamool fracas during Union home minister Amit Shah's Bhowanipore rally and the April 1 protests at EC's Strand Road offices.

Two days after the April 2 incident, EC suspended four senior Kolkata Police officers, including the DCP (II) South, and ordered disciplinary proceedings against them. Rupesh Kumar, the outgoing joint commissioner (crime), was singled out by Bengal opposition leader Suvendu Adhikari for bias.

Kumar will be replaced by Soma Das Mitra, DIG CID. Das Mitra headed the Bengal SIT Sandeshkhali probe, which Calcutta HC later handed over to CBI. Sudeep Sarkar will be the new joint commissioner (headquarters) and Debasmita Das, the DIG Bengal STF, will be the joint commissioner (intelligence). Kumar, who was handling the dual charge of crime and traffic, will now remain only as joint commissioner (traffic).

Among the DCPs, VSR Ananthnag will be the new DCP (South) and Saikat Ghosh will be the new DCP (South East). The DCPs of the North, East and Bhangor divisions have also been changed.

Immediately after this list of 12 IPS officers, EC issued another transfer list. On this, vacancies at the Alipore police station — resulting from the suspension of both OC Priyankar Chakraborty and additional OC Chandi Charan Banerjee following the April 2 incident — were filled by Tapan Nath, appointed OC, and Chameli Mukherjee, appointed additional OC. Salil Kumar Roy has been brought in as an ACP to head the DD's Anti-Rowdy Squad.

Sourav Bhattacharjee has been asked to take over as Kasba OC, a post that has been lying vacant. Six days after appointing Biswajit Debnath as the Kasba OC, EC removed him after he reportedly failed to mention Sona Pappu had a criminal record in his report to the poll panel. The OCs of Burtolla, Phoolbagan and Ultadanga were also changed in this mass transfer.

The third and last part of the transfer order, involving 29 Bengal police officers, included posting new officers in Barrackpore, Bhatpara, Bijpur, Naihati, Noapara, Halisahar, Mohanpur and Basudebpur, effectively shifting all officers in the industrial belt under Barrackpore Police Commissionerate. In Diamond Harbour police district, the officers heading Mograhat, Usthi and Kakdwip have been replaced. Three transfers each were also made in Darjeeling district and Asansol-Durgapur Police Commissionerate.

DANCE of DEMOCRACY: PAGE 6

Tamil Nadu home secy removed, Stalin urges EC to review decision

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

DMK MP Baalu alleged political bias in the appointment of the new chief secretary and questioned EC's jurisdiction with regard to replacing the Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption head

Chennai: With less than two weeks left for the assembly election, EC appointed K Manivasan as Tamil Nadu home secretary, replacing Dheeraj Kumar. Manivasan was asked to take charge immediately, and the state govt was directed to send a compliance report the same day.

The poll panel also directed that Kumar not be assigned any poll-related duties.

Manivasan's appointment came three days after EC issued orders appointing M Sai Kumar as chief secretary, replacing N Muruganandham, and Sandeep Mittal as DGP (Armed Reserve) and head of Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption (DVAC).

DMK treasurer T R Baalu on Saturday demanded the rollback of the orders appointing Sai Kumar and Mittal, alleging that the latter was an RSS supporter. Hours after Baalu's appeal, EC issued orders to remove Mittal as the DVAC chief, but retained him as DGP (Armed Reserve).

In a letter to EC, the DMK MP alleged arbitrariness and political bias in the appointment of Sai Kumar. There were no complaints from any party against Muruganandham, he pointed out, stating that the transfer lacked "any logical or justifiable basis".

On Mittal's appointment, Baalu questioned EC's jurisdiction. "DVAC has no role in the conduct of elections. EC's powers under Article 324 are limited to supervising and conducting elections, not making appointments to unrelated posts," he said. Baalu said Mittal was a "supporter of RSS and BJP", citing his social media activity. Baalu flagged allegations against Mittal, including a reference in a suicide note linked to an alleged construction scam during his tenure at National Forensic Sciences University.

Rare Modi-Rahul interaction sets social media abuzz

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

PTI

Vice president CP Radhakrishnan, PM Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi during the 200th birth anniversary celebration of Jyotiba Phule on Saturday

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Saturday exchanged pleasantries and talked briefly at an event, a rarity in the otherwise cold and indifferent equation between them.

It is not often that Rahul joins ministers and high functionaries like Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to greet the PM at commemorative events often held in Parliament complex but he did so on Saturday at a programme to pay tributes to reformer Jyotirao Phule.

As he acknowledged greetings from everyone, Modi appeared to ask Rahul something and both then chatted for a while as they waited for Vice President C P Radhakrishnan and President Droupadi Murmu.

The exchange went viral on social media and piqued interest in political circles. There were suggestions that Modi inquired about the health of Rahul's mother Sonia Gandhi who was recently admitted to a hospital. However, there was no official word on what transpired between them.

Rahul has often in the past skipped such events and has often been accused by BJP of not giving due regard to state events and high dignitaries. Congress, too, in turn has often alleged that govt does not accord protocol that is due to the leader of the opposition. Unsurprisingly, the pleasantries exchanged between Modi and Rahul created a buzz. Govt has announced a two year-long programme in the run-up to Phule's 200th birth anniversary next year. To guide and oversee the nationwide commemoration starting from 11 April 2026 to 11 April 2028, the govt has constituted a high-level committee under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, comprising 126 members.

Duty on diesel exports hiked from ₹21.5/L to ₹55.5

New Delhi: Govt on Saturday significantly increased export duties on diesel and aviation turbine fuel to dissuade oil refiners from exporting these fuels and to ensure adequate availability in the domestic market amid ongoing tensions in West Asia.

The ministry of finance issued a series of notifications hiking the export duty on diesel by more than 150% — from Rs 21.5 per litre to Rs 55.5 per litre — with immediate effect. The levy on ATF, or jet fuel, was increased from Rs 29.5 per litre to Rs 42 per litre. The export duty on petrol continues to be nil. Under the revised structure, the special additional excise duty on high-speed diesel has been raised to Rs 24 per litre, while the road and infrastructure cess now stands at Rs 36 per litre, which means a large chunk will now flow to govt.

Govt said these duties are not meant to boost revenue, but to stop fuel exporters from taking undue advantage of price differences.

The Centre had, on March 27, imposed an export duty of Rs 21.5 per litre on diesel and Rs 29.5 per litre on ATF in a bid to check windfall gains, as fuel was in short supply in international markets due to a squeeze on energy supplies amid the military conflict and export curbs imposed by China. It had also slashed excise duty on diesel and petrol to shield consumers and oil companies from the impact of high crude prices. TNN

Indian LPG tanker crosses Hormuz, first after ceasefire

New Delhi: LPG tanker Jag Vikram loaded with 20,400 tonne of cooking gas safely crossed Strait of Hormuz on Saturday, becoming the first Indian-flagged vessel to pass through the conflict-hit maritime choke point since the announcement of a temporary two-week ceasefire between the US and Iran.

Jag Vikram is the ninth Indian-flagged ship to exit the Persian Gulf since the war began on Feb 28. The vessel with 24 seafarers onboard is expected to arrive at Mumbai on April 15, shipping minister Sarbananda Sonowal said. At present, another 15 Indian ships remain in the Persian Gulf awaiting instructions to proceed. TNN

Bar priests who have travelled abroad from pujas at sanctum sanctorum: HC

Srikanth.Aluri
@timesofindia.com

Vijayawada: Priests who have travelled abroad should not be allowed to perform puja and worship the deity in the sanctum sanctorum of any temple, Andhra Pradesh HC has stated.

The court further directed that the state endowments department comply with the guidelines issued by Sri Sringeri Sharada Peetham that codify the traditional conduct and ritual purity required for hereditary priests.

On Dec 20, 2024, DSSS Subrahmanyam Somayaji moved the high court alleging non-implementation of guidelines issued by Bharathi Tirtha Mahaswami, the Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Sringeri Sharada Peetham, which is established in the lineage of Adi Shankaracharya. He contended that the endowments department issued a circular on Nov 10, 2010 with similar directions, but this was not implemented either.

K R Srinivas, who argued for the petitioner, submitted that according to the govt memo and the guidelines, hereditary priests were required to perform strict spiritual discipline, including Trikala Sandhya Vandanam (a vedic ritual performed at dawn, noon and night), Guru Upadesha Mantra Japa (sacred mantra given by the guru at the time of initiation), adherence to Vedic study, and maintenance of ritual purity in food habits and conduct. He further submitted that those who had travelled abroad, undergone shaves or haircuts contrary to traditional norms, or did not adhere to the prescribed spiritual practices shall not enter the sanctum sanctorum.

The govt pleader for endowments submitted that steps would be taken to comply with the guidelines.

Justice Nimmagadda Venkateswarlu disposed of the petition with directions to the state govt to follow the guidelines framed under the circular and those issued by Jagadguru Shankaracharya.

Reddit forum becomes gateway for experimental weight-loss drugs

- The import of Chinese peptides in India for personal consumption and illicit sales mirrors a worrying global trend, most extensively reported in Silicon Valley. This movement is driven by influencer communities that promote self-experimentation to "biohack" the body's performance, health, and longevity
- While peptides have been around for long, after insulin for diabetes, weight loss has become the most popular application in India, causing the illicit market to centre almost entirely around this objective
- The ones used for weight-loss are called GLP-1 medications and their demand even in the regulated market is soaring

A RAPID RISE

- The Ozempic-famed 'Semaglutide' became cheaper than ever last month with the launch of generics
- According to Pharmarack data, in a short time, it has propelled the GLP-1 market from ₹527cr last March to approximately ₹1,600cr
- Moreover, it has impacted sales of Eli Lilly's Mounjaro by **21%** in March
- Mounjaro had crossed the sales of antibiotic augmentin in Oct last year

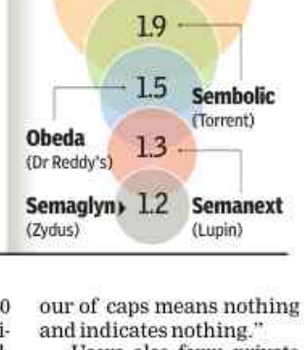
TRENDS AND DATA SPEAK

- India has a massive demand for weight-loss medicines and it is only expected
- The country is expected to be home to over 27 million children and adolescents (5 to 19 years) living with obesity by 2030. It will account for 11% of the global burden, according to Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey (2016-18)

- The **National Family Health Survey** (NFHS-5) noted that in adults the prevalence of obesity increased by **91**% among women, from **12.6**% to **24.0**%, and **146**% among men, from **9.3**% to **22.9**%

GENERIC SEMAGLUTIDE SALES IN INDIA

All figures in ₹ crore



▶Continued from page 1

A Reddit forum has become a gateway for Indians hunting for experimental weight-loss drugs still under trial, ringing alarm bells among experts.

The Reddit group — 'r/Retatrutide' — pulls 1.6 lakh weekly visitors from across the world. This is an experimental injectable medication that mimics three different hormones (GLP-1, GIP, and glucagon). In clinical trials, it has shown greater promise for weight loss than its predecessors.

"Anyone from India? I am very new to peptides and wanna talk with an Indian guy running Reta...," posted one user months ago on r/Retatrutide.

Recently, another user, Tarun (name changed), commented on the post: "I'm trying to find legit sources for Reta here but I'm not able to." He soon announced to the group that he had found one.

There are many like him who are trying to get their hands on Reta. At KEM Hospital, Dr Tushar Bandgar recalled a moment that left his team befuddled. A patient sent an internet-downloaded picture of a box labelled Retatrutide and asked if it could be consumed. "We told him it is unapproved for use," said Dr Bandgar.

TIMES Special

Playin' in the loopholes

A user-turned-seller, Gurgaon-based Ankit (31, name changed), said his weekly imports always exceed $500. He gives customers two options: club their order with his to bypass the $50 shipping charge, or buy directly from his stock as needed. Payments to Chinese vendors are in cryptocurrency.

As hunger dies, 'risk appetite' increases

Emboldened by the validation from social media, consumers and sellers claim they understand the dangers of such unregulated medication. One must have a "risk appetite" because they can "never be sure what they're consuming," users say.

Concerns regarding dosage or proportions occasionally manifest in online forums. Every now and then users on r/Retatrutide ask if a red cap means 10 mg or if blue means 5 mg, and if a colour means a "good" or "bad" batch. "Stop with this nonsense," one user reacted. Another said: "Colour of caps means nothing and indicates nothing."

Users also form private groups to co-ordinate lab testing. They buy Chinese peptide kits from the same vendor at the same time to test and then share the results publicly. "Good results are valid for a short timeframe. They don't hold true two months later," he said.

Divided by borders, united by Chinese peptides

In 2025, imports of Chinese hormones and peptides to the US–mainly in Silicon Valley–doubled to $328 million, according to US Customs figures cited by American media. Similar trends have been documented in the UK. "The whole world imports this stuff from China, not just India," says Ranjan, a comment that may well suggest the size of the problem.

UP govt to junk forest cases against 4,000 Tharu tribals

Krishna.Chaudhary
@timesofindia.com

Bareilly: UP CM Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said forest cases lodged against around 4,000 tribals belonging to the Tharu community would be withdrawn, bringing relief to poor villagers and their families who had been fighting the cases for over a decade.

The announcement, made in Lakhimpur Kheri, comes months after **TOI**, in a Nov 11, 2025, report, detailed how the forest dept had booked members of the community in 2012, including people who were blind and even those who were dead.

Without naming Samajwadi Party, Yogi said the previous govt had protected mafias and habitual offenders while harassing the Tharu community during its struggle. "...They harassed the Tharu community by filing forged cases against them, but now BJP govt won't let this happen," he said, before adding, "We will withdraw the cases."

TOI had reported how many of those booked were poor and illiterate villagers who kept appearing in court for years to fight cases for offences they said they had never committed.

Among those named in FIRs was 40-year-old Surdas Ram Bhajan, blind since birth, who lives in Sariya Parah, a Tharu village about 1.5 km from the India-Nepal border near Dudhwa Tiger Reserve. "I have never even seen the forest," he had told **TOI**. "I walk with my 70-year-old mother's help... My younger brother, Rajjan, is mentally disabled and has remained shackled in chains since childhood, yet both of us were booked."

Surdas said the CM's decision lifted a burden his family had been carrying for years. "I want to thank MLA Romi Sahani and CM," he said. Rajjan, 37, had been accused of tree felling.

Another villager, Har Dayal Singh, 55, who suffers from a chronic spinal disorder and cannot stand upright, had been charged with climbing trees to destroy bird nests. "They say I climbed a tree. I can barely stand," he had said. In Sariya Parah, where the population is around 1,500, at least 375 residents had been booked under various provisions of the Indian Forest Act and the Wildlife (Protection) Act.

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You are deep in our hearts and you will always be loved, remembered and forever missed.

Viewing at 10am on Monday 13th April 2026 at The Holy Ghost Church, Richards Park, followed by the funeral Mass at **10.30 am**. The Cremation will be at **12.15 pm** at the **Kalpalli Crematorium, Cox town, Bangalore.**

Deeply mourned by:
Her Children Chris & Sunita, Cheryl & Roy, Francis & Rosette, her siblings – Keith and Elaine, and her grand children-Nikita & Vishwajit, Ramiro, Jeremy & Mark

J&K removed from Aadhaar records of Ladakh residents

Naseer.Ganai@timesofindia.com

Srinagar: Even after six years after the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories, the Aadhaar records of the people of Ladakh continued to reflect J&K instead of Ladakh.

This has finally changed now. Residents of Ladakh can now see their identity reflected in Aadhaar records, with 'Ladakh' replacing 'Jammu & Kashmir' in the 'State' field. The long-pending public demand was addressed after the intervention of Ladakh LG, Vinai Kumar Saxena, who directed the UT administration to resolve the issue at the earliest. Subsequently, the administration took up the matter with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). The long-awaited correction has now been successfully implemented.

According to officials, the incorrect representation in Aadhaar records had been causing considerable inconvenience to the people of Ladakh. They were facing difficulty in using Aadhaar as a valid document for identity and address while availing various services, besides facing issues related to Aadhaar-linked records and progress reports.

To resolve the issue, the UT administration, in coordination with UIDAI, devised a mechanism to update the 'State' field centrally.

Instead of requiring each resident to individually visit Aadhaar centres for correction, the records were updated on the basis of PIN codes specific to Ladakh. These PIN codes were verified in coordination with the Department of Posts and shared with UIDAI.

Officials said residents can now easily download their updated e-Aadhaar from the UIDAI portal, and those wishing to obtain a PVC Aadhaar card may order it online by paying a nominal fee.

13 killed as bus rams van in Bihar, 22 hurt

Patna: Thirteen people died and 22 were injured after a bus and a van collided head-on on NH-31 near Gerabari village in Bihar's Katihar district Saturday evening, police said.

All the victims were in the van. Eight of them were killed on the spot, while five died during treatment at Katihar Sadar Hospital. Around 40 people from a tribal community, all from Purnia, were returning from Jharkhand via Naugachia when a bus travelling from Purnia towards Naugachia struck the from the opposite direction, Kodha SHO Sujeet Kumar said. Two motorcycles passing nearby were also caught in the impact.

Chief minister Nitish Kumar announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh for families of those killed and Rs 50,000 for the injured. Police and villagers launched rescue efforts and rushed victims to nearby hospitals. "The injured bus passengers alleged that the driver was drunk, and he hit one or two places along the journey... However, there was no proof of intoxication of the bus driver. He is also injured," SHO Kumar said. TNN

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I, Salini Nair Kuruvath W/o Anil Kumar Nair R/o E-202, 2nd Floor, Shriram Blue Apartments, Kadugodi Road, Kurudusonnenahall,Bengaluru, have changed my name to Shalini Nair for all Purposes.

I, ADISHESH MYSORE ANANTHAN, S/o MYSORE KESHAVA IYENGAR ANANTHAN, residing at # 77, Abhiman, Ground Floor, 2nd cross, Central Excise Layout, Vijayanagar, Bengaluru, Karnataka - 560040, have changed my name to ADISHESH ANANTHAN, vide affidavit dated 11.04.2026 before notary M K Devaki, Bengaluru

I, Akshat Kumar S/o Mahender Kumar Mangla, resident of 4131, Casa Paradiso 2, Sobha City, Bengaluru - 560077 have changed my name from AkshatKumar M Mangla to Akshat Kumar vide affidavit dated 10.04.2026 before Notary Public.

I, (Rajib Barik) S/O (Narayan Chandra barik)) 04/03/1989 residing at (post. Bandhatia, Thana, Dhamanagar,Bhadrak , odisha,756117), have changed my name to (Rajiv kumar barik) vide affidavit dated (10/04/2026) at (segehalli gate /ka gn)

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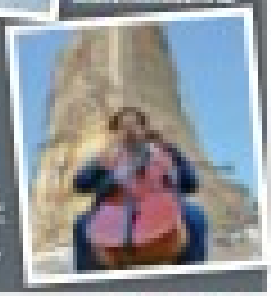
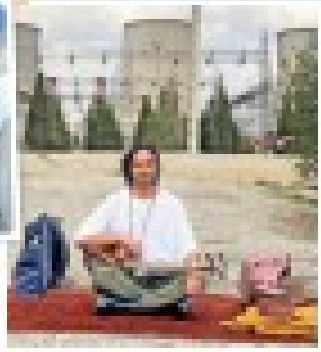


Hamidreza Afridah – Tehran, Iran, 2014

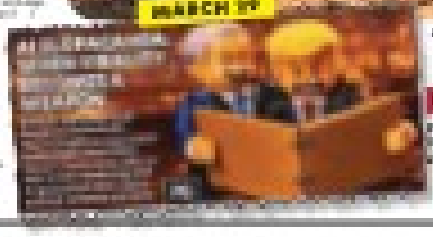


Ali Shamsari – Tehran, Iran, 1934

Vedran Smailovic – Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992

War, rendered in Lego

Humour and war and tragedy



Sins than an Oscar: Social media can't have enough of Lego memes

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Jinali with Raj

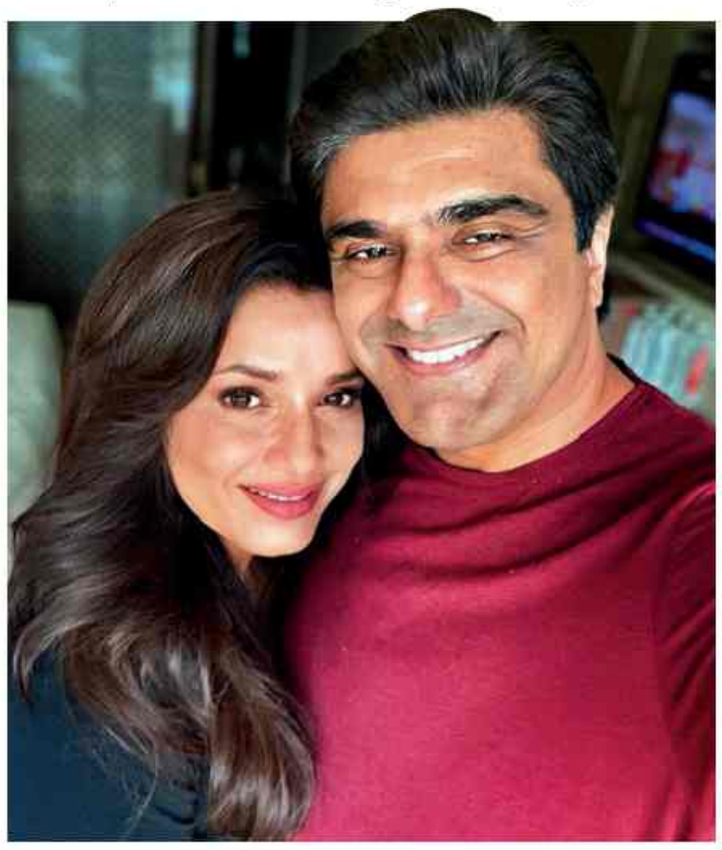
Strict mom to friendly figure: Why Neelam changed her parenting style

*She was just 15 when she made her debut in 1984. **Neelam Kothari** went on to become a sought-after leading lady, known for her girl-next-door charm, dancing skills and crackling chemistry with Govinda. In 2000, she stepped away from the limelight to focus on her family life and her jewellery designing business, but agreed, albeit reluctantly, to face the camera again for the reality series 'The Fabulous Lives of Bollywood Wives'. Mother to a teen now, Neelam spoke to **Sidhi Kapoor** about mom-guilt and why she allows her daughter to speak her mind*

Your daughter has entered her teens. What are some of the challenges you are facing, and how are you trying to navigate them?

To be honest, Ahana just turned 13. I have heard stories that when kids turn teenagers, things really change, but I think I'm dealing with a very sorted kid. From the other stories I have heard, my story is a little different. Ahana is still not into tank tops or make-up. She's not interested in social media. She doesn't like to be in the limelight. So, she hasn't reached that phase yet. Samir (actor-director Samir Soni, her husband) and I have kept her away (from the smartphone). She's a music lover, so she's more into that and her books.

As of now, I am not seeing any of those teenage issues. The moods fluctuate a little bit, which I believe is absolutely normal for this age. Apart from that, she's a good girl. I feel blessed!



> Ahana is very cool as she's seen me working through her childhood. If I have to take a long trip abroad, she jokingly asks, "How much money are you making? As long as you are making good money, it's fine!"

How do you balance giving your daughter independence while still setting boundaries and rules?

First of all, sleepovers are a big no. That is something which is not allowed. She's probably had one sleepover with her childhood friend, who lives in the same building. We have known their parents for years. Honestly speaking, we haven't really put down any ground rules. It's difficult to believe, but she's quite responsible and a conscientious child for her age. Samir and I don't have to really tell her much. She knows her rights and wrongs pretty well.

What are some essential life skills you've taught her?

Parenting when I was growing up and parenting these days is very different. Today, you have to be more of a friend to your child. Even if you say to your child that something is not allowed, you need to have a reason. Today, it's all about reasoning and giving a logical answer behind what you say to your child. It can't be "because I said so...". You need to have logic behind it. Then, being respectful to elders or anyone she meets is very important. Even giving respect to the staff is equally essential. As parents, we are very strict about it. These are small things we have imbued in our daughter. It makes me very proud when people say she is such a brave, well-mannered and sensitive child.

What's the best parenting advice you have ever received?

I don't think I have received any advice. I have just learnt all along. Being a friend to your child is the number one thing. Also, allowing your child to speak, whatever it may be, is important. Let them speak their mind and encourage it. There's so much happening in school, in their mind and their surroundings, so be your child's best friend. That's the best thing any parent can do.

As a working mother, how do you divide time between your career and family life?

I go crazy sometimes! Luckily, if I am travelling, Samir is around, and vice versa. He manages and pitches in. It's during evening time that mom-guilt kicks in. Things become a little more challenging for working mothers. But then it is what it is. Fortunately, Ahana is very cool as she's seen me working since her childhood. She gets it. If I have to take a long trip abroad, she will jokingly ask, "How much money are you making? As long as you are making good money, it's fine!" But the mom-guilt will always be there, no matter how understanding the child is.

> Parenting when I was growing up and parenting nowadays is quite the opposite. Today, you have to be more of a friend to your child. Even if you tell your child that something is not allowed, you need to have a reason

What about studies? Does she manage on her own?

That's another thing. There were certain subjects, like math, where we knew there was no negotiating. She was hesitant, and she used to cry when she had to go to classes. Maths gets very challenging in the International Baccalaureate system. But now she's breezing through. Samir has a finance background, so he used to teach her and help her with homework. I honestly don't understand anything when it comes to Math. But largely, she manages her studies on her own, so we don't really have to check on her studies and tests all the time.

What are some non-negotiables for you and Samir?

Respect for family, friends, and staff is of utmost importance to us. We believe that you have got to be around your child, talk to them, understand them, and reason with them. When I feel she's having a bad day and there's something going on, I just leave her alone and give her space. Then, in a day or two, she will tell me what happened and why she was upset.

How has motherhood changed you, and what have you learned about yourself through parenting?

A lot of change has happened in my approach to parenting. Earlier, I used to be the strict one. Samir was the lenient one. There are always disagreements at home about small issues like jumping on the sofa. He would be like, "She's a child. Let her be." And I would say, "No, it's not okay." Now, I think I have succumbed, and we are both on the same page. I have realised it's not worth it. It's also because kids of this generation mature way earlier. They are so much more aware and intelligent. Today's kids are more empathetic, too. I think we owe it to the schools of today. Maybe it's the new way of teaching at school, though a lot of learning comes from home too.

Any parenting regrets?

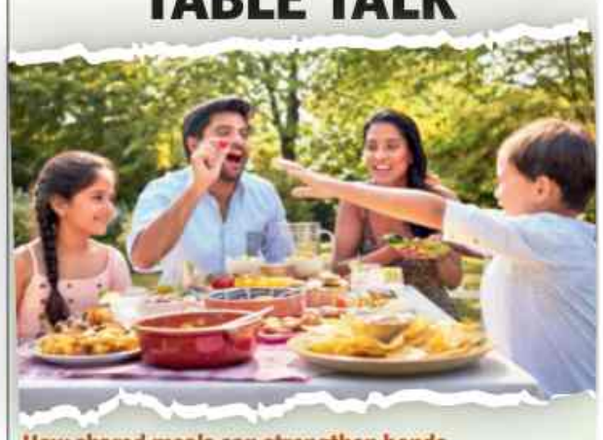
I think I have done a good job, if I may say so. I may have been strict in the beginning,but I think it has paid off. Would I do anything different if I look back? No.

Parent Pulse

nie

A column that opens a window into your child's world with insightful articles, activity prompts, and expert tips. Because parenting isn't just about guidance, it's about growing together

TABLE TALK



How shared meals can strengthen bonds

In a world filled with screens, the simple act of sitting down for a meal as a family is becoming rare—yet, more important than ever. Research shows that meals aren't just about food; they're powerful moments of connection, communication, and care that help shape a child's emotional, cognitive, and social well-being

A Daily Dose of Stability

Regular mealtimes offer a predictable space where children feel safe, heard, and supported. It's a place where they share small wins and big worries, building trust and resilience over time. Kids who eat regular meals with their families tend to show:

- Higher self-esteem and emotional resilience
- Fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression
- Stronger bonds with parents

Even on stressful days, a shared meal can act as a buffer, helping teens feel grounded and less alone

Talk That Builds the Brain

Chatting at the table boosts vocabulary, critical thinking and communication skills more effectively than reading storybooks. Teens who eat with their families are more likely to score better in school and stay committed to learning

A Natural Safety Net

Frequent family meals are linked to lower rates of substance abuse and risky behaviour. Why is that?

- Parents stay more in tune with their children's life
- Teens feel heard and guided, not judged
- Time at the table reduces unsupervised hours

This isn't about lectures—it's about listening. The trust built during everyday chats makes teens more likely to open up when it matters most

Start Where You Are

The food doesn't have to be fancy. What matters is gathering—whether it's over dal-chawal or takeaway pizza. Start with one or two meals a week. Keep phones away. Involve kids in setting the table or choosing the menu

Accused in minor's murder tries to flee, shot in legs in Andhra Pradesh

Tirupati: Police shot and injured a 19-year-old accused in a minor girl's murder in Kadapa of Andhra Pradesh when he tried to flee custody on Saturday, reports **Sandeep Raghavan**.

A Venkatesh, arrested for allegedly slitting the girl's throat, was being shifted from Mydukur police station amid protests. He escaped, attacked a police team with a rod, injuring two constables.

After warnings and a shot in the air failed, police fired at his legs to subdue him.

He and the injured police personnel were admitted to RIMS, Kadapa.

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1	2026_DoDP_832999_1Dtd : 20.03.2026. (Tender Type : EOI)	राइफलिंग मशीन–मध्यम कैलिबर शस्त्र बैरल निर्माण/Rifling Machine – Medium calibre weapon barrel manufacturing.	संख्या–01 1 Number

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M. Tech.	Valid GATE Score/Written Test Conducted by NSUT (for Non-GATE)	http://www.nsut.ac.in
B. Des.	Rank of UCEED-2026/National or State Level Examination-2026 in "Design" or "Allied Design Fields"	
M.Sc. (Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics)	CUET-2026 score	
MA (English, Applied Psychology)		
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MBA	CAT-2025 or MAT-2025/26 Score plus Personal Interview	
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POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH CHANDIGARH

XXXIX CONVOCATION

Please refer to advertisement published in various leading newspapers on 10.04.2029 vide which the schedule of XXXIX Convocation was intimated. **Now the same has been re-scheduled for 30th April, 2026 in the Bhargava Auditorium of PGIMER, Chandigarh.** A full dress rehearsal will be held on **Wednesday, the 29th April, 2026 at 9:00 AM** in the Bhargava Auditorium. **It is compulsory for all recipients of degrees/medals to attend the rehearsal. Those who fail to participate in the rehearsal will not be allowed to take part on the day of Convocation.** Kindly intimate the confirmation for participation in the Convocation by **15th April, 2026 through google form link (bit.ly/39convocation). The list of awardees & detailed information is available on the website of the Institute. (http://pgimer.edu.in)**

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REGISTRAR

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that our client intends to acquire the vacant agricultural land bearing **Survey No. 18/2**, measuring **3 (three) acres 20 (twenty) guntas, including 14 (fourteen) guntas of 'A' kharab land**, situated at Kyalasanahalli Village, K.R Puram Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, and more particularly described in the **Schedule** hereunder written ("**Schedule Property**") from its owners *i.e.*, (i) N. Lokesh Reddy, son of late S. Narayana Reddy, (ii) N. Jayaraj Reddy, son of late S. Narayana Reddy, (iii) N. Jagadish Reddy, son of late S. Narayana Reddy, (iv) Suprith Reddy, son of late S. Narayana Reddy, (v) Pavan Reddy, son of late S. Narayana Reddy, (vi) N. Rajagopal Reddy, son of late S. Narayana Reddy, (vii) N. Yuvaraj Reddy, son of late S. Narayana Reddy, (viii) Shyla, daughter of late Hamsaveni, (ix) Ranjitha, daughter of late Hamsaveni, (x) Anusha, daughter of late Susheela, and (xi) Veena, daughter of late Susheela, (xii) Divya, daughter of late Susheela, and (xiii) Nalini, daughter of late S. Narayana Reddy [(i) to (xiii) are collectively referred to as the "**Owners**"]. The Owners have represented that they are the joint absolute owners and in peaceful use, enjoyment and unhindered possession of the Schedule Property with unhindered rights of alienation over the same.

Any person(s) having or claiming any estate, right, title, interest, benefit, possession or demand whatsoever to or in respect of the Schedule Property or any part thereof including by way of any sale, transfer, development, assignment, exchange, mortgage, charge, lien, gift, trust, inheritance, devise, bequest, possession, lease, sub-lease, tenancy, sub-tenancy, license, leave and license, care-taker basis, possession, release, relinquishment, any lis pendens, maintenance, encumbrance, easement, trust, will, partnership, FSI/TDR consumption or otherwise howsoever, or under any memorandum of understanding, agreement for sale or power of attorney, any agreement, deed, document, writing, conveyance deed, deed of pledge, letter of intent or any option, right of first offer/refusal or pre-emption, or under any succession, family arrangement/settlement, litigation, decree or order of any Court of Law, or otherwise, is hereby required to notify the same in writing with notarized/certified true copies of documentary proof in support thereof, to the undersigned at their under mentioned address within 15 (fifteen) days from the date hereof. Any claims without supporting documents will not be entertained.

In case no such notice is received by us within 15 (fifteen) days from the date of publication hereof, it shall be presumed that the freehold title of Owners to the Schedule Property is clear, marketable and free from encumbrance/s of any nature whatsoever and no other person(s) has any right, title or interest of any nature whatsoever in the Schedule Property or any part thereof, and any such alleged claim or interest shall be deemed to have been waived and disregarded for all intents and purposes and shall not be binding on our client.

SCHEDULE

All that piece and parcel of the vacant agricultural land comprised in the Survey No. 18/2, admeasuring 3 (three) acres 20 (twenty) guntas including 14 (fourteen) guntas of 'A' kharab land, situated at Kyalasanahalli Village, K.R Puram Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, and bounded as under:

Property	Boundaries			
	East	West	North	South
Survey No. 18/2	Private property	Kyalasanahalli Doddagubbi Main Road	Private property	Private property

Date: April 12, 2026
Place: Bengaluru

Harsha Sudhindra
Partner
Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas
Level 3, Prestige Falcon Towers, 19, Brunton Road, Off M.G. Road
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Advt. No: IISER-K/ACA/2026/06 **Date: 12/04/2026**

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Arkavathi, Shivanapura, Bengaluru North562162

NOTICE INVITING APPLICATIONS FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION OF VENDORS

The Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS), Bengaluru, invites applications for pre-qualification from eligible contractors for the following works in connection with the Auditorium and Science Gallery being constructed at its campus:

1. Acoustics Works Estimated Cost: Rs.40 Lakhs
2. Audio Visual (AV) Works Estimated Cost: Rs.75 Lakhs

Application documents can be downloaded from the official website: **www.cens.res.in/en/tenders**

Duly completed applications, along with all required documents, shall be submitted in sealed envelopes, superscribed as follows

- "Application for Pre-Qualification for Acoustics Works Auditorium, CeNS."
- "Application for Pre-Qualification for Audio Visual (AV) Works Auditorium, CeNS."

Applications should be submitted to the following address on or before 14 April 2026.

CeNS reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications without assigning any reason.

Note: Bidders interested in participating in both works shall submit two separate sealed covers.

Administrative Officer

प्लाज़्मा अनुसंधान संस्थान
Institute for Plasma Research
इंदिरा ब्रिज के पास, भाट गाँव, गांधीनगर–382 428, गुजरात, भारत
Near Indira Bridge, Bhat Village, Gandhinagar-382 428 Gujarat, India Web: www.ipr.res.in

प्लाज़्मा अनुसंधान संस्थान (आईपीआर), जो भारत सरकार के परमाणु ऊर्जा विभाग के अधीन एक सहायता प्राप्त संस्थान है, मुख्य प्रशासनिक अधिकारी के पद हेतु आवेदन आमंत्रित करता है। / Institute for Plasma Research (IPR), an Aided Institute of the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India, invites applications for the post of Chief Administrative Officer.

विज्ञापन सं. **ADVT. NO. 06/2026**

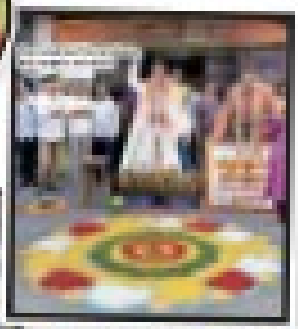
क्र.सं./ Sr. No.	पद का नाम/ Name of the Post	रिक्तियोंकी की संख्या/ No. of Vacancies	वेतन स्तर/ Pay Level
1	मुख्य प्रशासनिक अधिकारी/ Chief Administrative Officer	01	वेतन मैट्रिक्स (7वें केंद्रीय वेतन आयोग) के अनुसार वेतन स्तर–12 (ग्रेड पे ₹ 7600/-)। / Pay Level 12 (G.P 7600/-) as per Pay Matrix (7th Central Pay Commission).

विज्ञापन की विस्तृत जानकारी, पात्रता मानदंड, आवेदन प्रक्रिया आदि के लिए, कृपया संस्थान की वेबसाइट http://www.ipr.res.in/documents/jobs_career.html या परमाणु ऊर्जा विभाग की वेबसाईट https://dae.gov.in पर जाएं। आवेदन की अंतिम तिथि 15/05/2026 है।

For detailed advertisement, eligibility criteria, application procedure, etc., please visit Institute's website http://www.ipr.res.in/documents/jobs_career.html or Department of Atomic Energy's website https://dae.gov.in Last date for application is 15/05/2026.

निदेशक, आईपीआर / **DIRECTOR, IPR**

25 years on, Kotigobba returns to roaring crowds in theatres



Wish to champion a cause
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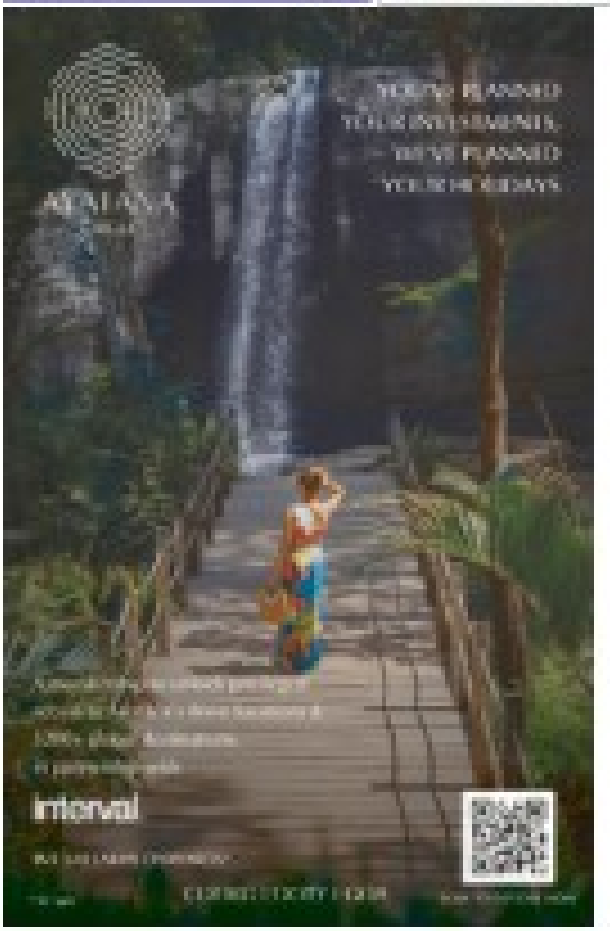
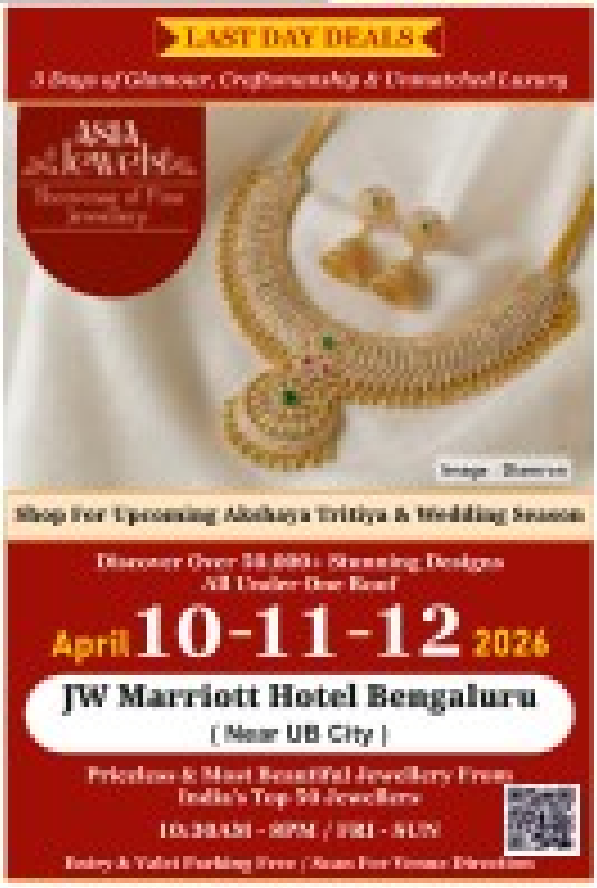

AYALANA
YOU'VE PLANNED
YOUR INVESTMENTS,
WE'VE PLANNED
YOUR HOLIDAYS
interval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April 10-11-12 2026
JW Marriott Hotel Bengaluru
(Near UB City)
Priceless & Most Beautiful Jewellery From
India's Top 50 Jewellers
10:30AM - 8PM / FRI - SUN
Entry & Valet Parking Free / Scan For Venue Directions

'Big khela' coming to Bengal, declares Modi

'Will Bring UCC, End Politics Of Appeasement'

Rohit.Khanna
@timesofindia.com

Kolkata: PM **Narendra Modi** sharpened BJP's Bengal campaign on Saturday, dismissing Trinamool Congress' "khela hobe" slogan and framing the assembly polls as a battle to protect Bengal's identity, while promising to implement Uniform Civil Code (UCC) to end what he called "politics of appeasement".

"Bahut khel khel liya hai tumne," Modi said, adding those who had "played far too long" would now face accountability. "Sabka hisab liya jayega (everyone will be held accountable)." At Katwa, impressed by the crowd size, he said it was a sign of a "big khela" coming to Bengal.

Addressing rallies across Burdwan, Murshidabad and South Dinajpur, Modi accused TMC of relying on "infiltrators" to build a vote bank and intimidate majority groups. "Let UCC be implemented here; appeasement will stop once and for all. Bengal will make real change this time," he said, echoing a manifesto promise unveiled by Amit Shah to enact the law within six months of taking office.

Modi described governance in Bengal as dominated by a "syndicate raj". "Here syndicate is govt and govt is syndicate," he said, linking corruption to an exodus of companies, loss of jobs and migration of youth.

At Jangipur in Muslim-majority Murshidabad, Modi focused on identity and demographic change. "TMC wants to use infiltrators' votes to form a govt of infiltrators. We will not let Bengalis become a minority in Bengal," he said, also citing repeated attacks on Ram Navami processions and alleging perpetrators roam free.

Responding to criticism from CM Mamata Banerjee that BJP will not deliver on its promises, Modi defended his party's record. "BJP keeps its promises," he said, citing support prices for jute and assuring that welfare schemes would continue.

Shah urges tribal voters to 'avenge' Murmu insult, promises 'son of soil' CM

Rohit.Khanna
@timesofindia.com

Kolkata: Union minister Amit Shah appealed to Bengal's tribal communities Saturday to "take revenge" through their votes for what he called insults to President Droupadi Murmu during her visit to the state last month, stepping up BJP's outreach in tribal belts while promising a "son of soil" as CM if his party forms govt.

BATTLEGROUND WEST BENGAL

"Murmu ji came to meet tribal community members in Bengal, and Mamata ji insulted her. I have come to appeal to every tribal brother and sister to avenge the insult. She cannot accept that a poor, tribal daughter has become the President," Shah said at Chhatna in Bankura.

Murmu's visit was marred by controversy as TMC govt allegedly changed her scheduled venue for a Santhal conference, which lacked adequate arrangements, and CM Mamata skipped the event. Addressing rallies in Chhatna and Baghmundi, districts with sizeable tribal populations, Shah accused TMC of dividing Santhals and Kurmis over 15 years and, along with Congress, neglecting tribal communities. "Neither Mamata nor Congress ever elected a member of the tribal community as the President. Modi ji decided to make a Santhal sister the President. It was an honour to the entire tribal community," he said.

Mamata alleges bid to cancel her nomination in Bhowanipore

Tamaghna Banerjee & Dwaipayan Ghosh | TNN

Kolkata: Bengal CM and Trinamool chief **Mamata Banerjee** alleged Saturday attempts to cancel her Bhowanipore nomination through "false affidavits". She filed nomination on April 8 and it was accepted April 10 after scrutiny.

Bhowanipore now has 13 candidates, among highest in Bengal, including eight independents outnumbering those from registered parties. Two complaints against her, traced to an independent candidate from Nadia, were rejected, according to sources.

"Our fight is not with BJP, but with BJP's 'vanishing machine'. In my own constituency, those traitors filed two false affidavits against me to cancel my nomination. They did not succeed but remember, they tried... They made many efforts to stop me from contesting. So, you can understand: if they can do this to me, what can they do to you?" Banerjee said.

One objection flagged a "name mismatch" involving proposer Ismat Hakim, spouse of Kolkata mayor Firhad Hakim. She had earlier used premarital surname Ismat Ara but updated documents to Ismat Hakim. Documentation submitted during scrutiny resolved issue.

Another objection alleged undisclosed criminal cases from two decades ago when Banerjee was in opposition. "This could not be proven, nor was any evidence produced," a party functionary said, adding she had marked that column "not applicable".

Mamata calls SIR 'big scam' to aid BJP

Kolkata/Keshiary: CM Mamata Banerjee alleged Saturday that EC's special intensive revision was a "big scam" aimed at "bringing BJP to office" in Bengal, warning of backlash against those enforcing SIR. "Voters are being deleted indiscriminately. Remember, out of 90 lakh voters deleted, 60 lakh are Hindus and 30 lakh are Muslims. People are still being made to stand in queues. It would be proved one day that SIR was a huge scam. Those trying to please their bosses by torturing and harassing people will get justice," she said at a rally in West Midnapore's Keshiary. TNN

CBFC denies role in 'Jana Nayagan' leak

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

SCREEN SHOT: TVK chief Vijay

New Delhi: Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) on Saturday dismissed claims of Tamil film "Jana Nayagan" being leaked from its system as "baseless and misleading", asserting that its certification process follows a secure, access-controlled protocol. The clarification comes over the film's alleged online leak in high-definition format, which has triggered outrage among fans and industry stakeholders.

Explaining its process, CBFC said all films submitted for certification are secured through a Key Delivery Message (KDM) mechanism, with password-protected access strictly controlled by the producer or filmmaker. "Without a valid KDM, the content cannot be accessed or viewed," officials said, underlining that the board does not retain independent access once the Digital Cinema Package (DCP) is handed over.

BATTLEGROUND TAMIL NADU

According to CBFC, the DCP of "Jana Nayagan" was formally handed over to the applicant in Mumbai on March 17 with due acknowledgement and has remained with them since.

The controversy follows reports that the big-budget film starring Vijay – whose party, TVK, has emerged as a player in the assembly polls in Tamil Nadu — surfaced online initially as a brief five-minute clip before its full version was reportedly leaked on piracy websites. The leaked footage included key sequences such as the title introduction and portions of the climax, raising concerns about internal security lapses within the production or distribution chain.

Director H Vinoth urged audiences not to circulate the leaked content, stating that each scene represents the efforts of hundreds of people.

The episode has led to fans demanding accountability and tighter safeguards.

Cong: BJP defaming, threatening Church

T'puram/Kottayam: A day after NDA candidate from Poonjar in Kerala, PC George, came out against Kanjirapally bishop for canvassing votes for UDF candidate in the assembly elections, opposition leader VD Satheesan Saturday accused him and his son Shone George of defaming clergymen and Catholic Church mouthpiece Deepika. The father-son duo were trying to intimidate the Church with the support of BJP leadership, the Congress neta alleged, stating that "secular Kerala" will defeat any attempt to attack the Christian community. TNN

32001/53/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER,
KHAIRIBHANDAN & DEO IRRIGATION PROJECT, KARANJIA
AT/PO: KARANJIA, DIST.: MAYURBHANJ-757037
Tel: 06796-296144, e-mail: cce.dip.dowr@gmail.com
"e" Procurement Notice No. 01/ CCEKDIP of 2026-27
Bid Identification No. 01/ CCEKDIP of 2026-27

1.	Nature of the Work	: Civil Work
2.	Number of Works	: 01 (One) No of Individual Work
3.	Approximate amount put to tender	: Rs 2.45 Cr.
4.	Period of Completion	: 09 (Nine) Calendar Months including rainy season
5.	Class of Contractor	: "B" & "A" Class Contractor
6.	Date & time of Availability of Bid document in the portal	: Dt.20.04.2026 at 10.00 AM to 04.05.2026 up to 5.30 PM
7.	Last date & time of seeking tender clarification	: Dt.30.04.2026 up to 1.00 PM
8.	Last date & time of receipt of Bids in the Portal	: Dt. 04.05.2026 up to 5.30 PM
9.	Date, time & place of opening of Technical Bid/s (Cover-I)	: Dt. 05.05.2026 at 10.30 AM in O/o the Chief Construction Engineer, Khairibhandan & Deo Irrigation Project, Karanjia
10.	Date, time & place ofopening of Financial Bid/s(Cover-II)	: To be intimated after evaluation of Technical BID
11.	Name & address of the officer inviting Bid	: Chief Construction Engineer, Khairibhandan & Deo Irrigation Project, Karanjia, AT/PO-Karanjia, PS-Karanjia, Dist-Mayurbhanj, PIN-757037

*Further details can be seen from the Govt. web site www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
Any addendum/corrigendum/cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said Website.

Sd/-
Chief Construction Engineer,
Khairibhandan &
Deo Irrigation Project, Karanjia
OIPR-32001/32337/1/26-27/0002

34001/33/2627

OFFICE OF THE
SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER ELECTRICAL CIRCLE (R&B)
NIRMAN SOUDHA BHUBANESWAR
E-mail seec.bbsr2010@gmail.com
Bid Identification No.S.E.E.C (R&B) 02/2026-27
No 1383 / Date 06.04.2026

The Superintending Engineer, Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, Bhubaneswar on behalf of the Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bids for E.I. works which are to be received through online bidding, double cover system as detailed in :**https://tendersorissa.gov.in**. The details of bid documents will be available in the above website from dt.15.04.2026 at 05.00 P.M. to dt.29.04.2026 up to 05.00 P.M. The bidders must possess compatible Digital Signature Certificate of Class II or III. Bids received online shall be opened dt.30.04.2026 at 11.30 A.M. in the Office of the Superintending Engineer, Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, Bhubaneswar. Further details can be seen from the e-procurement portal **www.tendersorissa.gov.in**.
Addendum / Corrigendum, if required, will be available only in the Website.

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer
Electrical Circle (R&B) Odisha, BBSR
OIPR-34001/34006/1/26-27/0001

34001/24/2627

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
WORKS DEPARTMENT
E-mail: ceroads.bbsr@gmail.com
RFP Identification No. CE-Roads-I-05/2025-26

1. The Engineer-in-Chief (Civil), Roads-I, Odisha (Authority) on behalf of the Works Department, Govt. of Odisha is engaged in the Development of State Roads and Highways in Odisha, and, as part of this endeavour, Govt. of Odisha has decided to undertake the following "**Projects**" under **EPC Contract** (Engineering, Procurement and Construction) basis, and has decided to carry out the bid process for selection of the parties/Joint Ventures to whom the Project may be awarded eventually.
2. Nature of project : Road work
3. No. of project : 1 No.
4. Tender Paper cost : Rs. 10,000.00
5. Available of bid document in the website : From 10.00 A.M. of 15.04.2026 to 5.30 P.M. of 12.05.2026
6. Date of Pre-Application conference : 24.04.2026 at 12.30 P.M.
7. Date of opening of Bid : Dt.13.05.2026 at 11.30 A.M.
8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website: **https://tenderodisha.gov.in**. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Sd/-
Engineer-in-Chief (Civil),
Roads-I, Odisha
OIPR-34001/34181/1/26-27/0001

34001/14/2627

E-mail.IO-sectcrb_2006@yahoo.co.in
Tel/Fax – 0671-2301751/2302751

Government of Odisha
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
CUTTACK (R&B) CIRCLE, CUTTACK
('e' – PROCUREMENT NOTICE)
Bid Identification No.CCE.Ctc.(R&B) 21/2025-26.

1. The Chief Construction Engineer, Cuttack (R&B)Circle, Cuttack on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites on Percentage rate basis bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for Road and Building works as mentioned below.
2. No. of work : 03 Nos.
3. Nature of work : Road and Building works
4. Class of contractor : **'A' & Special Class**
5. Tender paper cost : Rs.10000/- **(online)**
6. Available of bid document in the web site. : **From 15.04.2026 to 17.30 Hours of 29.04.2026**
7. Date of opening of bid : **Dt.30.04.2026 at 11.00 Hours.**
8. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website **https://tendersodisha.gov.in**. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said web site

Sd/-
T. Behera
Chief Engineer (Civil)
Cuttack (R&B) Circle
OIPR-34001/34012/1/26-27/0002

North Eastern Railway
E-Tender Notice

Dy.Chief Signal & Telecommunication Engineer/Project/N.E. Railway/ Varanasi for and on behalf of President of India invites through E-Tender (Two Packet System) for the following works from the contractors having sufficient experience as per eligibility criteria mentioned in tender document:- **Tender Notice No. & Description of work:** NER_SnT_ Project_BSB _01_ 2026 **Name of work:** Design, Programming, Installation, Supply, Testing and Commissioning of Electronic Interlocking (EI) System Conforming to RDSO Specification No. RDSO/SPN/192/2019 or Latest (With Latest Amendment if any) as per SIP along with Indoor & Outdoor Work Including Part Supply of Materials at (SANR, CC, GB, BALR, DEOS, NRA, BHTR, BTK, MW, ZRDE, PCK, DDA, CW, EM, DDP, and KPS) (Centralized Type) Stations and Siwan Jn, & CHPG Station (Distributed 1+2 Type) in between GKC-CHPG Sections, Automatic Block Signalling work in CPR Jn-CI-CHPG Block Section and work for OFC cables GKC-BTT and CPR Jn-CI-CHPG Sections in Varanasi Division of N.E.Railway **Approx. Value:** ₹ 1335562573.92 **Bid Security:** ₹ 26711300.00 **Completion time/period from the date of issue of acceptance letter :** 18 Months **Date & Time of Closing :** 26.05.2026 at 15.00 hrs. **Note :** 1. Validity of Offer should be **90 days** from date of closing of tender. 2. Detailed tender notice, Eligibility criteria, terms & conditions are available at website http://www.ireps.gov.in 3. The Bid Security shall be deposited either in cash through e-payment gateway or submitted as Bank Guarantee bond from a scheduled commercial bank of India or as mentioned in tender documents. The Bank Guarantee bond shall be as per Annexure-1.1 (Tender document) and shall be valid for a period of 90 days beyond the expiry of bid validity period.

Dy.CSTE/Project/
CPRO/Signal-10 Varanasi
DO NOT SMOKE BIDI/CIGARETTE IN TRAINS

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY
PROFORMA 10-01
INDIAN RAILWAYS
PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines and premises situated on the completed section of the under noted section of the South Western Railway, that 25000 Volts, 50 Hz AC, overhead traction wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section. On and from the same date, the overhead traction line shall be treated as **LIVE** at all times and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead line **Marikuppam station** to **Dravidian university.**

Sl. No.	Section	Chainage in KM		Probable date of Energization
1	Marikuppam to Dravidian university phase-I	15/823.4	5/720	30.05.2026

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Place: Bengaluru
Date: 01.04.2026
Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer, Traction Distribution-I,
Construction, Bengaluru Cantonment-560046
PUB/19/AAS/PRB/SWR/2026-27

Download the **RailOne** app. RailOne is the all-in-one railway app by Indian Railways. Passengers can book reserved tickets, unreserved tickets, platform ticktes, and season passes, check PNR status, order food, and access many more services at their fingertips. Use digital payment to book unreserved tickets through **RailOne** app, and enjoy up to a **3%** discount.
South Western Railway-SWR SWRRLY @SWRAILWAYHQ @sw_railways

ARTIFICIAL LIMBS MANUFACTURING CORPORATION OF INDIA
(A GOVERNMENT OF INDIA UNDERTAKING)
G.T. ROAD, KANPUR – 209217,
UTTAR PRADESH
Phone- +91 9777792693, +91 7979031295
Email: alimco_sales@alimco.in
Website: www.alimco.in

EOI Ref. No.: MR/EOI/01/2026-27, dated 12.04.2026
CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO) is a Schedule 'B' Miniratna Category II Central Public Sector Enterprises, registered under Section 8 (Not for Profit motive) of the Companies Act 2013, (corresponding to Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956) is functioning under the Administrative Control of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities. It is 100% owned Govt. of India Central Public Sector Enterprises with an objective of benefiting the persons with disability and sr. citizen to the maximum extent possible by manufacturing and providing assistive devices to them across the country. In endeavour to enhance outreach of benefits of ADIP scheme & RVY scheme by providing aids and assistive devices to Persons with Disabilities & Sr citizen across the country, ALIMCO has started the opening of Pradhan Mantri Divyasha–Vayoshri Kendra (PMD-VK) on PAN India basis. ALIMCO is the only manufacturing company producing various types of assistive devices under one roof to serve all major types of disabilities across the country. In order to provide high-end/high quality assistive technologies to all Divyangjan and Sr Citizen, the ALIMCO is planning to open Retail Outlets Assistive Technology Marts (AT-Marts) on franchise mode across the country. The corporation intends to shortlist the interested agencies in order to select suitable partner/agencies of the country for Establishment and Operation of Assistive Technology Marts (AT-Marts) in different districts across the country. Only shortlisted agencies will be considered for issue of Request for Proposal (RFP) for opening of the AT-Marts.
ALIMCO thus invites EXPRESSION OF INTEREST for the interested agencies /parties of India who are willing to partner with the Corporation for a long-term Business Agreement for opening of the AT-Marts on franchise mode for the serving of Divyangjans & Senior Citizens. Interested parties may visit our website www.alimco.in for details. The last date for submission of EOI is 05.05.2026 till 17:30 Hrs.

Dy. General Manager (Mktg.),
ALIMCO, Kanpur

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
Tender Notice No. GSU/Elect. /PRYJ/E-Tender Notice/2026/62 Dt. 09.04.2026
E- Tender Notice

Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/GSU/N.C.Rly/Prayagraj, for and on behalf of the President of India, invite the following e- Tenders on prescribed form for the following works up to **15.00 hrs. on 04.05.2026**. The details of the tenders are as under:

TN: GSU-EL-WC- 76-2026	Cost of work (In ₹): ₹ 1,72,68,652.90
Name of Work:"Electrical work in connection with-Provision of 01 Island platform at Etawah station by yard modification in existing goods shed area (HWH end) in prayagraj division".	
Bid Security (in ₹): ₹3,45,400.00	Duration of Completion : 12 Months
Tender Opening Date: 04.05.2026, 15.30 Hrs	

Note: - 1.The complete information along with tender document of above e-Tender is available on Website **www.ireps.gov.in** 21days prior to the date of opening of the tender. 2. Bids other than in the form of e-bids shall not be accepted against above tenders. For this purpose, vendors are required to get themselves registered with IREPS website along with digital signature certificate. 3. In case of any difficulty helpdesk available on the website of IREPS may be approached.
782/26(DG)
North central railways @CPRONCR www.ncr.indianrailways.gov.in

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY
MATERIAL MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
('e' Tender Notice for the Supply of Stores, No. EPS/02/2026)

PCMM/WCR on behalf of the President of India, invites the following advertised tenders through E-procurement System. No manual/postal offers shall be entertained. Tenders can be accessed under the link website **https://ireps.gov.in** for details and for submission of Tender.

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Short Description	Tendered Qty.
1	20254384B	Kit for pressure Regulator Assembly	222 Nos.
2	38264182	Knuckle for upgraded high tensile centre buffer coupler	19080 Nos.
3	38262202	Bogie Centre Pivot bottom for CASNUB bogies	1586 Nos.
4	82265092	Pembrolizumab 100 mg/4 ml	30 Nos.
5	38252199A	MODIFIED ELASTOMERIC PAD (DESIGN-A)	98429 Nos.
6	65265001	Supply, Installation and commissioning of EOT crane SWL 25 Ton (MH) & 7.5 Ton (AH)	01 No.
7	8125WCR TP-12	Manufacture and Supply of 6.2 mm thick Composite GRSP	2448758 Nos.
8	38262168	Bolster Liner size 153 mm x 120 mm x 8 mm thick	62994 Nos.

DUE DATE:- For Sr.No. 1: 28.04.2026, For Sr.Nos. 2 to 5: 05.05.2026, For Sr.Nos. 6 & 7: 08.05.2026 and For Sr.No. 8: 14.05.2026.
For tenders with estimated value below ₹ 50 lakhs, interested firms are advised to visit **www.ireps.gov.in**
For Principal Chief Material Manager, West Central Railway, Jabalpur.
स्वच्छ भारत अभियान - एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

BJP needs oppn backing for 2/3 majority to pass bill

▸ Continued from P 1

The outreach comes against the backdrop of resistance by opposition parties to govt's plans for swift implementation of the quota instead of waiting for completion of the 2027 Census: something that would almost ensure that women's reservations don't come into force before 2034 Lok Sabha polls.

BJP will need the support of opposition parties to get the two-thirds majority required to ensure passage of the constitutional amendment in Parliament.

Stressing that the cause of women's reservation in Parliament and state legislatures was higher than any one party or individual, Modi said: "It is a moment to demonstrate responsibility towards women and future generations. Since all political parties have expressed the desire to increase women's representation in politics for a long time, this is the right time to turn that aspiration into a reality." The women's quota bills seek to de-link implementation of women's quota from the findings of 2027 Census and propose it to be based on 2011 Census instead.

In his letter, PM recalled the unanimous support for the women's quota bills his govt had moved in 2023, terming it as 'a memorable moment that reflected our unity'

In his letter, PM recalled the unanimous support for the women's quota bills his govt had moved in 2023, terming it as "a memorable moment that reflected our unity".

He also seemed to address the opposition's reservations about the timing of the passage of bills by recalling that all parties had favoured early implementation. "During those deliberations (in 2023)... There was a broad consensus that the provisions of this historic law should become effective at the earliest. Leaders from many parties were of this view..." he said.

The amendments will result in the number of seats in Lok Sabha rising from 543 to 816, with 273 reserved for women. Earlier this week, the Union Cabinet had cleared the amendments, with three bills to be introduced: Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, Delimitation Bill and a legislation to extend the reservation for women to Union territories, such as Delhi, J&K and Puducherry, which have legislatures.

In his letter, PM said constitutional experts have been consulted on the issue, and govt has also engaged in a dialogue with political parties.

The proposed amendments are a "strong step" towards enhancing participation of women who account for half the population, he stressed.

Bengal, TN, Goa record net deletions of 10.9%, 10.6% and 10.2%, respectively

▸ Continued from P 1

The total deletions across the Phase 2 states/UTs thus added up to 7.2 crore. However, after factoring in inclusion of 2.01 crore names — new voters (Form 6 by first-time voters) and existing electors enrolling at new addresses (Form 8) — the net deletions are down to 5.2 crore from the start of SIR on Oct 27, 2025.

"After the purification of rolls, there now exist 45.8 crore voters in the 12 states/UTs. The deletion of over 6.5 crore ASDD and other electors who were there on the rolls but not voting and posed the risk of bogus voting in their names, has led to a pure and accurate roll, serving the purpose of SIR. This explains the all-time high turnouts in Assam and Puducherry on April 9," said an EC official.

State-wise, the percentage of roll purification (net purification divided by total electors before SIR) was the highest at 16.6% in Andaman & Nicobar Islands, followed by 13.2% in UP, 13.1% in Gujarat and 11.3% in Chhattisgarh. West Bengal ranked fifth among the 12 states/UTs in terms of purification percentage.

Significantly, apart from 27.1 lakh removed from Bengal rolls after adjudication, another 6 lakh were removed based on objections to their inclusion in the roll. West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Goa recorded net deletions of 10.9%, 10.6% and 10.2%, respectively, while Puducherry witnessed 7% net decline in its electorate.

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WANTED BRIDES

MATRIMONIALS
WANTED BRIDES
BY CASTE
AGARWAL-BISA

WANTED Bride : Suitable MATCH invited for a 40 year Handsome, Highly qualified Baniya Boy Hails from a reputed business family of UP. The candidate is amicably divorced. Seeking a Hindu girl (any cast) from a cultured background. Divorcee or widow without child are welcome to apply. Money No criteria. Please send biodata and recent photographs to: sanjeevalag2206@gmail.com

35/5'7 H'sm Smart Self Employed very decent Income hails from a Reputed Bs'nss Fmly seeks B'ful slim Fmly oriented girl from upper middle class Fathr 9881734049.

29/5'10" B.TECH- IIT MBA-IIM, wrkg with MNC 1 Cr + Fathr Indus. Caste no bar. No demand Aff. fmly #8120991552 Em: bdmatj@gmail.com

High Status Educated Business / Professional Agarwal Family of Delhi/Mumbai/Nagpur/London. Networth Multi-Crore staying in own Independent Houses in Posh South Delhi / Central London, Seeking Match for Exceptionally H'Some 34Yrs. / 6'1" Son (LL.M London), Running Reputed International - Commercial Law Firm well settled in Delhi and Very B'Ful, Slim Daughter 28 Yrs. 5'4" / British Lawyer Partner with leading US Law Firm in UK, settled in London. (Caste no bar)
WhatsApp: 8826819445
agarwal6362@gmail.com

BRAHMIN

B.TECH Fair Telugu Brahmin 1983 born/183cm Singapore MN Bank seeks Telugu/Tamil Brahmin girls Graduates /Proff. Slim below 36y primarily willing to relocate wats app 9840108553 (parents)

USA-BASED, MS(Fin), 31/5'11", Sanadya Brahmin, well-settled professional, seeks well-educated, compatible girl, preferably USA-based or willing to relocate. Contact: 9425093237

86 Iyer Brahacharanam Ayilyam 4th padama Srivatsam M.Sc maths with research from NUS SINGAPORE Pursuing Ph.D in maths Job : Asst . Professor Ct : 9600085010

B.TECH (BITS), PG, 25, 5'9", Saryupari Brahmin, Job. Father Engg business, Mother Doctor. Medico/Prof. Qual / Educated Girl. 8424085123

IYER, Vadamal Kousikam Poosam 1998 M.Tech AI from Bits pillani Job :American investment bank in Bangalore Ht :5'9 Wt :65 Ct : 9486115153

NRI (Mumbai/UP) family seeks brahmin veg/ qualified/ beautiful/ tall/ fair/ slim girl for USA settled / 29/6.1', B.Tech/ MS/ MBA/ handsome boy. cont:+91 9930708494

1995, Iyer Vadama Avittam Sreevatsam B.Com , MBA from TAPMI, Manipal Chief Manager, ICICI Bank , Chennai Salary : 1.8 Lakh 5'10 ", 70Kg Ct : 9497800896, 9744971851

ALLIANCE invited from girls of any State for our son B.Com MBA 1988 born /6'3" doing own business in Puducherry (Pondicherry) having good income, # 9894750160

KKB boy Gotra Upmanyu 34/5'8"M.Tech CS, wkg MNC Bangalore. Father Retd. Judge High Court. Preff. equivalent match. Family bsd Lucknow. WApp 8299594224

WELL educated & well settled smart Brahmin boy wking in HSBC Bank Bangalore, 30 yr, 5'9" wanted North Indian Hindu Brahmin girl. Ph: 9844209278 / 9844721095

ALLIANCE for son/ Dec 84 Kettai Iyer Shadavarshnam Single.Did MS Engr USA. SS Id : 226680/84 Ct : 9890150814 kvraju261246@gmail.com

1996 Star : Puram Gothram : Kowsigham B.com MBA Job : Senior QC Analyst Salary – 60000 PM Ht, Wt :170cm 90kg Ct : 9840353258, 9003201607

1993 Iyer&Vadama Ashwini Kousikam B B A Manager Comvivo Tech Mahendra Rs. 15 LPA seeks Employed girl Ct : 9880918449, 9731681109

1994, Thiruvathira Koundinyam B Tech. CA inter & 1 group cleared in final pursuing Family business Expectations : Any Graduate Ct : 9249733959

1997, Magam, Haritham, B.E. E.C.E Project Lead, Sosaley Technologies Pvt. Ltd. Chennai Salary : 1.50L PM 178cm, 72kg Ct : 9940296835, 9445119894

IYER Vadama 96 Gothram Kasyaba Uthrattathi Height 5'9" Weight 60 Kgs B.Com, CA. Audit Managaer Chennai 15L PA. Ct : 7299942530 / 9841037126

WANTED BRIDE
For Fair, Handsome Brahmin Boy, Born 1991, 5'8". MBA from prestigious Stanford University (USA), BTech (CSE) from NIT (Double Gold Medalist). Rich Affluent Nuclear Business Family of IITians and IIMians from Bhopal, MP.
Mob.: 9399820743
dr.sharma1141@gmail.com

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1985, Iyengar Vadakalai Thiruvonam Srivatsam PGDM (Data Science) from Great Lakes, Btech (VIT) 1.75L PM 5'10" Ct : 9643246504

1991 Barathwaja Chittirai 5'8" 65 B.Tech(CSC)MBA Sr Product Manager Bangalore Salary:38.28 L/A+US Co. shares Ct : 94436 40614 / 98941 36206

1990 Tamil Iyer Bharani Koundyana B.Com./Profsnl Manager- Credit Analyst in Barclays Bank, Chennai 18L Plus PA 9884424162 / 9176883015

JAIN

29/5'10" B.Tech IIT,MBA(IIM) wkg with GOOGLE,1Cr+ father mfg Ind'lst, affluent family, One child, Caste no bar, No dowry # 9172878985 al67jn@gmail.com

36 BE 5.5" Unmarried Jain Oswal, Vegetarian, Marwadi, Traditional Fly Diamond Merchant, T.Nagar Chennai +91 9994066680 Caste No Bar

KAYASTHA

SAX 41 /174 Handsome fair reputed family class one civil servant seeks b'ful tall qualified homely girl of reputed family. Very short marriage annulled. Upper caste no bar. Mob 8953598276, 7376499879 Mail ddks47@gmail.com

BHATNAGAR boy 30/5'6" M Tech from IIT BHU seeking beautiful girl from reputed family contact 9425113269, 9243935856

PQSM4 Delhi based Mathur Boy, May96, 5'10", BTech/MS(CS), Working in Noida. Contact-8320550957

KHATRI

BRIDE WANTED
Suitable match for Punjabi Khatri High Status, Well Established Computer Engg. (MIT), MBA (XLRI, Jamshedpur), very Handsome, very Fair, Clean Shaven, Convent Educated, Non Manglik Boy 35/6'0" having own Real Estates and Power Generation business (High rental income) in Jamshedpur. Looking for Punjabi girl of reputed family. No Dowry will be Accepted.
CONTACT : 6207121650
88jamshedpur@gmail.com

SAINI

BTECH IT professional, Nov93/6feet from Rajasthan Manager MNC above25LPA Seeking Educated family-oriented girl Ph:9828317724

TAMIL IYER

CHENNAI propertied unmarried Iyer Male 53/180 MA DFT Project Coordinator seeks any graduate brahmin woman except divorcees cell : 8056149246

1996, Iyer Vadama Vishakam Bharadwaja BE,MS Job : Scientific Researcher - K T University Germany, 4.L PM H: 6.4 ft Wt. 80kg Ct : 9790979292

2002 Iyer Vadama Utthiradam Gowthama Moolandham in Veda Padasala 5.5ft Job : Vaidegam Salary Rs.80K PM Ct : 80567 39478, 97890 31693

IYER Brahmins 1999 Mrigasirsa Kashyapa 158 CM Bachelor's in Architecture Design Lead (Freelance), Dubai. Ct : +971 582828511

IYER Vadamal Rohini 66yrs Six Lac PA Divorcee Girl Varan Below 35 Age to Give Birth to Child Ct : 94441 91969

VAISH

SUITABLE Match for Gupta Boy, Engineering Graduate from USA, Dec. 98/5'9" Director in well established family business of Real estate and education in Bhpl. em: sunilgupta191167@gmail.com (m) 9425301535

SM for unmarried Gupta boy Oct 79, 5'-8", MCA, working MNC Gurugram 30 LPA. Bureau & Divorcee excuse. WhatsApp 8427276447

BY COMMUNITY
AGARWAL

AGARWAL Punjabi boy, March 98, 5'4"well settled in Bangalore family bususiness seeks educated Hindu girl from respectable family. 9341053100

MARATHA

MARATHA Dr. 27 MD Radiology, 5'10" handsome, seeks beautiful MBBS/PG match. Prefer for all upper caste. 9423192892

RAJPUT

LODHI Rajput boy 5'11" 4/1/98 fair B.Tech bangalore based (home city Lucknow) working in MNC ctc 18LPA.seeks beautiful B.tech /MBA working girl.contact no 8960380664.

Soulmate Premium
WANTED BRIDE

Age: 39
Location: Mumbai
Origin: Kolkata
Religion: Hindu
Languages: English, Hindi
Food Preference: Vegetarian

A finance professional looking for real, meaningful companionship.

The best relationships grow through understanding

Drawn to music, conversations, and the simple joys of companionship, he values balance between numbers and nuance, structure and emotion. "My work demands clarity and precision, but I've always been drawn to understanding people, stories, and what makes life meaningful," he shares.

Ready for a meaningful second chapter, he values depth over display. He believes companionship grows when two people truly understand each other through shared laughter and comfortable silences, connecting beyond the obvious and appreciating everyday moments.

Reflecting on compatibility, he adds, "I admire kindness, emotional maturity, and curiosity about life. You don't need to be similar, but there should be a shared intent to grow, support each other, and build something steady." For him, mutual respect and understanding are key.

He sees marriage as a partnership built on trust, warmth, and shared growth, where both individuals feel supported while continuing to evolve.

Friends describe him as calm, dependable, and thoughtful. He enjoys meaningful conversations, music, and time with close friends and family, while also appreciating quieter rituals unwinding with a cup of cinnamon coffee.

He believes in showing up with honesty, kindness, and consistency, and hopes to build a relationship that feels easy, supportive, and genuinely fulfilling, where both people grow while enjoying the journey together.

This OR that?
Mountains or Beaches: Beaches
Tea or Coffee: Blue tea (with the occasional cappuccino)
House parties or Clubbing: House parties
Movies or Books: Movies
Joint family or nuclear family?: Nuclear

Looking for...
Real, meaningful companionship built on mutual respect and shared growth, with someone who is happy, kind, thoughtful, and emotionally mature.

Interested in knowing him better? Write to him at rohan.b12@yahoo.com

BY PROFESSION
GOVERNMENT/ DEFENCE

DEFENCE Class1 Officer,Sheikh-Siddiqui boy 28/5'8",Father National Highway Class1 Officer,Sister Commercial Pilot,Lucknow based#9450447406

BY RELIGION
CHRISTIAN

WANTED Christian God fearing girl preferably PG in medical for 5ft 7" MDS handsome boy 29 yr reputed family in Jabalpur Con : sandeep_2011@rediffmail.com 7692800306

HINDU

MUDALIAR, 33 Years Old, 174 Cm. Height, Engineer Employee, Hyderabad. Belongs To A Well-Off Family. Seeks A Suitable Bride Between The Ages Of 27 To 30 From A Well-Off Family. Ct: 98845 13749

SEEKING Bride for NRI,Handsome,35,5'9",Reddy, Affluent family. REQ: Girl working in Australia. con: 7396279292, 8639232860

MUSLIM

WANTED beautiful doctor PG/PG going for sunni Mch Uro doctor boy from well settled dini doctors family mob 9589035183.

GENERAL
CASTE NO BAR

MCA+MBA, Punjabi-Hindu, 41/5'8 never married. Wkg in BLR MNC 45 LPA. Seeks non-manglik educated girl. #9810157842

BENGALI (36 yrs, 5'10), Sr. Exec in a Tech MNC in Bangalore (30L) seeking a suitable prof. qlfd. girl based in B'lore. Caste no bar. Call 9073909929/8582836439

SM for NRI (SC) boy/ 40/ 5'11"/ S/w engg/ separated/ soft & family oriented Parents retd. govt ser. Priority for Hindi belt. Caste no bar. M 9696211153

PQM4 H'some Brahmin Boy ,BTech, MBA ISB, 31Yr, 5'10", Teetotaler Non Smoking,CTC 40 LPA, w'king Gurugram. 7060884999.7060761485.

KOLKATA based 30/5'7"/ B.Tech/30+LPA Sr PM, keeps clean-shaven (bald look). Bisa Agarwal B'ness family. Caste no bar. WA 8777872709.

PQM for Pb Khatri NM boy Dec91/5'6" 7.5LPA MBA Working Admin Gurgaon. Caste no bar. #9899242416, lakshayahuja06@gmail.com

PQM4 33 years, 6 feet, handsome, strongly built punjabi saraswat Brahmin boy working in MNC in Bengaluru . Salary 47+lac pa. 7489778004

SECOND MARRIAGE

GRADUATE H'Some May'86 5'11"/Divorcee Garg boy/ own Bs'nss/ Good Income, Seeks B'ful, Edu culture bride. Call: 9899066394

RELIGION NO BAR

38/5'9" Unmarried Boy Caste No Bar Btech-MBA IIM, Working MNC 40LPA Business family Accept Div & Widow. 9407932961,7587736854

BY LANGUAGE
BENGALI

BENGALI CA boy , Sept'81/ 5'8", Wkg in MNC Bank London, UK citizen, seeks Prof Qual wrking girl, min 5'3", within 40, +91-8904823096, subjaya2026@gmail.com .

MALAYALI

MALAYALI Pillai, 39, Bangalore-based entrepreneur, B.E., M.S., divorcee; seeks educated, cultured bride from good family. 8088542510

PUNJABI

NM, PQM for H'Som Veg, NM, Bahl Boy, Mar'97/ 5'9, B.Tech, Del, MBA (NMIMS-Bom), Wrkg Tata Grp, Blr, 33 LPA # 9899112611/ 9811765551

PUNJABI Arora boy 35 Yr/ 171/B.Tech, MS USA. Employed in USA (H1B), Seeks Edu. employed bride.Parents own flat in Delhi # 9899696058

WANTED Punjabi Bride 30/5'9" Btech-MBA IIM, Working MNC 40 LPA. Caste No Bar Business family. Contact: 9407932961, 9009486689.

BY NATIONALITY
NRI/ GREEN CARD

US based well settled Electrical engineer PhD brahmin boy 1995/5'10" seeks US educated working girl. contact 8448950105

WANTED GROOMS

WANTED GROOMS
BY CASTE
AGARWAL - BISA

CA Agarwal Girl 32/5'-1" Wheatish, Job Gurgaon 21 Lpa, Seeks Well Settled, Highly Educated, Vegetarian Groom. Cont: 9839083290

BRAHMIN

Brahmin, B.Tech, b. 1997, North Indian, beautiful girl, 5'6", working in Bangalore. Seeks prof qual Brahmin groom (pref Software). Ph No: 9414391911

B'FUL GB 1990/5'3" ph.D Bio chem,researcherin K.T.H Uni sweden Pref. br. w'qlfd stld or willing stld in Scandinavion /europe countries 960 2744455

PG Doctor/ IITIAN/ UPSC for Beautiful Brahmin 34/ 5'4" Asst professor AIIMS doctor family 7091527011

JAIN

JAIN, slim, fair & beautiful girl (1996, 5'6"), Software Engineer in MNC (60 LPA, Bangalore) seeks qualified, vegetarian match. Tel: 9313573094

ALLIANCE INVITED
South Delhi based Jain family seeks alliance for daughter, born January 1997, 5'6", slim, graceful, highly qualified. Graduate from Lady Shri Ram College (DU); MBA from Stanford University, USA. Value-oriented, with a balanced traditional and global outlook. Vegetarian Jain.
Seeking well-educated, well-settled,cultured match from a reputed Jain/Agarwal vegetarian family, professional/ business background, metro city preferred.
Contact with detailed biodata on WhatsApp:
99908 94400

KAYASTHA

BHATNAGAR April 96, Non manglik, graduate Xavier's, journalism ACJ Chennai Working in leading channel. Mumbai. Father retd Army officer. Seeks well settled boy only from Mumbai 9752523699

SEEKING a qualified boy for a June/96-born girl, 5'6", MBA-Advertising, working in an MNC in a metro city. Family based in Lucknow #9415101865

NAIDU

SEEKING Never married Tamil / Telugu groom age (43-44)working in Chennai or US for Naidu bride., SWE Ct +91 9543322082 / 044-31547506

BY COMMUNITY
JAT

MBA BTech girl Sep 86/5'3 Job Bank Canada PR, US Green card, Father Doctor Delhi seeks Prof Qual boy-9818617806, aadi.rajyan@gmail.com

NORTH INDIAN

BEAUTIFUL & Fair Brahmin girl working at Tier-1 US MNC, 45-50LPA, 30yrs, 5'6". Affluent family settled in Bangalore. Looking for a handsome boy 5'10" & above working in good company. M:9419181698

BY PROFESSION
DOCTORS

27, Adidravida/caste no bar awaiting divorce, Doctor MS general surgery,govt hospital employed, looking for well settled specialist Doctors based Bangalore/Chennai.94440 75961

KAYASTH 17.4.96, 5'6" NM MBBS, MS, Persuing M.ch in Plastic Surgery 11.50Lpa Seeks w'sttld Dr Prefd. Uppr cast no bar. 9425081375,9424054010

SUITABLE MATCH FOR A GIRL
29/5'4", MS (ENT)
Currently Senior Resident at GMC Kozhikode. Belongs to a respectable Punjabi family from Mumbai. Father is into Construction Business, Brother is Deputy Commissioner (IRS). Looking for a highly qualified professional (Medical/Civil Services/Business) from a Cultured Background.
Pref : 5'7"+, Age : 29-33 Yrs.
Call: 9820053170

BY RELIGION
CHRISTIAN

RC, ASST Prof.PhD,in Univ of Madras,Chennai 47/150cm, brown complexion,upper middle class,divorcee seeks suitable Christian groom.send profile W.app only 9962009303

HINDU

MBA, MCom(30/5'1")only child,working in MNC,of bengali industrialist.Own house in South Kolkata.Seeks alliance frm prof. qualified elite family .9748704571

B.TECH IT Age 26, 5'3"Wkg MNC Bangalore, Seeks Upper middle class Prof. Qual boy. 8951391683

SHRIVASTAVA Girl 19-03-89 (9:50 AM) /5'6 SAP Bangalore 43LPA. Family from Bhopal, MP Looking for suitable boy Contact: 9425149643, 9424467288

SC BTech Girl June 95, 5 Ft, Vegan working in IT (Software) Hyd 24 LPA looking for a suitable groom from IT & wants to be childfree. WA 7842979955

GIRL B.E(ECE), 23/5'4", Wkg prof., Bangalore. Seeks VP-Lingayat BE/IIT/MBBS prof., well-settled groom, 24-28. M: 9084511881/9353083079

Looking for GROOM
Bangalore based Beautiful divorcee Bengali girl, height 5'3" age 31working as a Pilot in Airline as captain
Email at: Suchato2002@yahoo.com
Call /message on 8527014778

MUSLIM

PQM4 Sunni Syed, U. P. Girl, good looking, 1998born, 163cm, Grad, wrkg for an MNC at Bangalore, 6Lplus, from Syed/Shaikh boys from U. P. Wrkg at Bangalore. Send full biodata at shhrizwi53@yahoo.com .

SUNNI Sheikh Siddiqui girl, 5'3"/ 1996 smart, convent-edu, MBBS MD Medicine, affluent family. Seeking MD/MS/DM /MCh doctor, Civil Servant or Businessman. # 9839901213

GENERAL
CASTE NO BAR

SAINI, wanted suitable groom for a mangalik beautiful, well-educated girl (DOB 1999), fair, 5' 2" postgraduate , belonging to a respectable family. Working as a voice calling officer in a private bank at Noida. Groom should be well-settled, educated, non-smoker, teetotaler and from a good family background. Preference for professionals working in government / private sector. Caste no bar for suitable match. Interested families may contact: 8076176864, 9013766752

HINDU LINGAYAT telugu 28/172/B Tech computers Top NIT(2014-2018)/software job with 15 LPA (2018-2021) prepared for UPSC (2021-2026) up to interview not selected / want to persue career again /present passive income 21lpa (through properties and investments) both parents gazetted officers/ seeks central/state/psu officers/PG doctors/ highly placed private sector/soft ware employees caste language and location no bar 9505063063

MBA, B'ful with modern out-look Aggarwal daughter May '86/5'5"/ Wrkg as Sr. Communication specialist in Delhi, both parents CAs. Seek Prof . Qlfd. well stld never married groom from a reputed family. caste no bar. Send complete BHP to 9811036513, Email: caashokgupta@yahoo.co.in

BEAUTIFUL, 5'7", fair, slim, N/M Rajput girl. Respected Delhi family.Foreign-educ, Fashion profession.Seek well-setld, tall, N/M groom, 30-45y.Caste no bar.NRI welcome.Ph. 7827742658

MBBS, MD Anesthsiology Tata Kayastha Bride 22.7.87/5'2" Mumbai,D.dib fel Cardio & C care MRCP Part I & II. Pref. MD/Dr, IT-Ph: 9821212408, E: sinhaassociates27@gmail.com

SM4 well educated Sept'84/ 160cm wkg Sr. Manager Punjabi Khatri never married girl Jaipur bsd edu n cultured fmly pref India based professionally settled boy. drhemantanand@gmail.com

PQSM4 Sikh Girl, Fair, June' 89, PG Diploma, B.Com. Agility Lead, MNC Hyderabad. 8390380566-Sister. Prefer: Punjabi-Sikh/ Hindu

SEEKING aliance from upper caste for Bangalore based, beautiful girl, 95/5'6", MArch, daughter of Army officer, mother, sister doctors.Contact 9885186147

SM4 Kayasth girl October 89/5'4"/fair/B.Tech. from IIT plus MBA (USA) 90 LPA works in Bangalore. Caste no bar. # 9411219372,9456600079 after 8PM

DGM Mumbai, 36/5'6", Sindhi Good Looking girl, Divorced. Seeks suitable Match, Caste no bar. Call: 9969058697 / 9833592418

SM4 V. B'ful Kayastha girl 89/ 5'8" MA Eng, DU, MBA Premier Inst. Mumbai. VP in HSBC Bank in HO Mumbai. CTC 45 lac.Cont. 8080586600/ 7506941405

COSMOPOLITAN

IAS/IPS/IIT/PROFESSOR /WELL Qualified Match For Beautiful Fair 31YR 168 CM Gaur Bhhamin Girl Jaipur Based Family PhD English From Oxford UK Mail: anuragupmanyu02@gmail.com WhatsApp: +91 9929355077

BENGALI, 5'3"/1989, Assistant Professor of Economics in a renowned Atlanta college seeks alliance from liberal, educated men, settled in the US, preferably in Atlanta or nearby. +91 98314 37792

BEAUTIFUL, slim Rajput girl, NM 35/5'7". PG (Europe), Des Consultant in Delhi. Looking for well-settled NM groom, tall, 35-42 yrs. js.vivah26@gmail.com

ATTRACTIVE 31, 165, well-educated (IIT+MBA), family-oriented. Affluent, cultured family. Seeks kind, compatible groom. Call or WA 9345 634 365.

PRETTY, Fair, B'lore, Professional, 33 5'7", Master's, Progressive family, Non-veg. Groom tall, cultured, educated, smart, well-placed. 8618070295.

NAIDU girl, 30/5'8", MBA, MNC professional, Rs. 40L, Mumbai. Seeks well-settled, qualified groom, Rs. 40L+. WhatsApp: 9426614998

SECOND MARRIAGE

DIVORCEE Tamil 41 PQ MNC B'lore seeks qualified Hindu groom in India without issues CNB, ndkp2025@outlook.com

BY LANGUAGE
BENGALI

WELL-SETTLED Alliance for Chandigarh based Bengali Girl Pastry Chef, 94 born, 5'4". Business Family from Chandigarh.Bengalis & Non-Bengalis (Upper Cast only). Contact Phone: 8284854506

SM4 Bengali Rajbanshi 30 MBBS doing MD (Anaes). Delhi based parents. Caste no bar. 7003080000 prashyish@gmail.com

PUNJABI

SM4 B'ful, well-edu. Pjbi girl, 27/5'1". Runs own B'ness From repu. Pjbi b'ness fmly, Delhi. Seeks Pjbi b'ness class fmly # 9810075108

GROOM WANTED
A WELL EDUCATED PUNJABI/HINDU GROOM FOR A POSTGRADUATE VERY FAIR CHARMING PUNJABI KSHATRIYA DAUGHTER 33 yrs. 157 cm FROM A HIGHLY EDUCATED LEADING BUSINESS FAMILY AT BHOPAL.
Email: bs6925ed@gmail.com

TAMIL

B.E., MBA., 28/6'1 MNC Bangalore Saiva Vellalar Brahmin Veg Girl seeks suitable alliance Ph 9841535955

BY NATIONALITY
NRI/ GREEN CARD

NRI Professional match, Meritorious Girl studied & works in Japan. Prefers overseas. (5 ft 6 in,1999). Affluent Punjabi family. WhatsApp only +919811552233

✔ **BS** Comp Engg from USA, Feb 90/5'2" Punjabi Gupta girl, Wkg Int Org Toronto, seeks PQ boy in USA/ India/Canada, 9889105601

MATCH for Seattle Microsoft SW Engr, Dec'91,5'5",beautiful North Indian girl. Caste, lower age no bar. Parents in Bangalore WA 9845624616

JAIN 28, 5'7" B'ful S/W Eng. wkg Meta Newyork 1.80 CR (Ft ENT Dr.) seeks US bsd w'stld w'edu gud looking boy Upper cast no bar 9301550045

RAJPUT girl, NRI (Poland) Slim fair 31 Yrs, 5'5" MBA working in MNC. Seeks suitable Match, Father NRI Retired MNC, Call 9821203504

An Elite Industrialist family of Delhi seeking alliance for their 28/5'1, Ivy League educated, beautiful, cultured, smart daughter based in US. Looking for well educated, cosmopolitan, well settled, progressive boy from respected affluent family.
Contact 9811109134
Or Mail Us At
shinegroom01@gmail.com

Craft ice: The artisanal heart of your drink

$138.9 bn

projected size of the global craft ice market by 2031

WINDOW TO THE WORLD

UBE AND PANDAN TAKE OVER COFFEE MENUS

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Saveetha Institute of Medical And Technical Sciences was declared as deemed to be university in 2005 under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956. Its history dates back to 1986 with the formation of the Saveetha Medical and Educational Trust. The Saveetha Dental College, established in 1988, was the first of its constituent colleges. SIMATS is structured into 17 distinct constituent colleges that cover a wide range of professional and academic disciplines.

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Saveetha Institute of Medical And Technical Sciences (SIMATS) isn't just a university; it's a global powerhouse of education, healthcare, and research nestled in the heart of Chennai's innovation hub, a vibrant ecosystem where professional excellence and social responsibility meets. The institution is steered by the vision of **Dr. N. M. Veeraiyan**. His leadership style is characterized by "redefining" rather than "repeating." By moving away from traditional rote learning, the university focuses on an innovation driven model meaning the curriculum is constantly updated to keep pace with global technological shifts. This is why the institution consistently climbs the ranks in global frameworks like QS, Times Higher Education and Shanghai Rankings.

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Dining

Instead of a traditional mess, the campus features 125 canteens and food courts offering a variety of cuisines to cater to a diverse student body.

Hostel

Offers "4-season" luxurious hostels with options for AC/Non-AC rooms. Facilities often include attached Kitchenettes, Fridges, and Washing Machines.

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Professional Grounds: An ICC-approved cricket turf, a FIFA-approved football field, and ITF-classified acrylic tennis courts with floodlights.
Indoor: 4 modern AC gyms, a gymnastics hall & a 6-lane swimming pool.

Transport

A fleet of over 150 air-conditioned buses, connects the campus to various parts of chennai & neighboring districts.

Research

Saveetha maintains a high standard of research facilities & output, with approximately 60% of its faculty publications appearing in Q1 journals.112 faculty members named in the 2025 Standford -Elsevier list of the world's top 2% scientists.

Career Placement

The university has maintained a placement rate of approximately 97% to 98%. The highest salary package offered was Rs. 44LPA.

Advanced Training

Specialized training at SIMATS from various fields specifically catering to practitioners from USA, UK ,Australia, Canada, Sri Lanka ,Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia,Singapore, Ireland, Bangladesh, Korea & Vietnam.

Funding Lives

Unlike traditional hospitals where admission starts with a cash deposit, Saveetha inpatients receive **Rs.5000/-** upon admission to cover immedicate hospitalization expenses.

Awards

Major awards comes from students winning **National and International Hackathons** (like Smart India Hackathon), **skill competitions** (TN Skills), and academic symposiums. Faculty members frequently receive **"Best Teacher," "Significant Contribution,"** and **"Research Excellence"** awards from global bodies like the IEEE, Indian Red Cross and various medical associations. Recently Saveetha won the prestigious Al Shammery and Al Madani Global Prize for **"Exemplary Educational Institution in Dentistry"** at AEEDC Dubai 2026 presented in front of more than 50,000 delegates, experts & industry professionals.

National Rankings

NAAC NATIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION COUNCIL **A++**

UGC **Category 1 University**

NBA NATIONAL BOARD OF ACCREDITATION **Tier 1** accreditation

International Rankings

Times Higher Education **World University Rankings 2025** **351- 400** 2nd in INDIA

6 WORLD RANK In Dentistry — SCOPUS SCIMAGO INSTITUTIONS RANKINGS 2026

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QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS **901- 950**

Times Higher Education **Impact Rankings 2025** **101- 200** SDG 14 : Life Below Water

UI GreenMetric World University Rankings **206** OVERALL

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High stakes in Islamabad; Trump turns up volume in Washington

Threatens To Resume Destruction If Iran Fails To Negotiate A Settlement

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: US President Donald Trump bluntly threatened to resume the destruction of Iran if its top functionaries did not come to a negotiated settlement, while his vice president JD Vance began talks with an Iranian team primed by Tehran, refusing to fold and wanting Washington to unfreeze its assets, among other concessions.

There was no word from Islamabad about any progress in talks between Vance and Iranian team till the time of writing Saturday, but there was plenty of output and volume from Trump, who kept up a barrage of social media posts, attacking everyone from Iran to European nations to his favourite target — the "fake news media".

via Reuters

Iran delegation led by parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and foreign minister Abbas Araghchi arrives in Pakistan on Friday night

'The only reason they are alive today is to negotiate'

Asserting that US is winning militarily and negotiating from strength, Trump warned that Iran must comply quickly or face escalation. "The Iranians don't seem to realize they have no cards, other than a short term extortion of the World by using International Waterways. The only reason they are alive today is to negotiate!" he wrote.

In another post, he lashed out at the "fake news media" for suggesting US is losing the war. Many US commentators, including some from MAGA world, have argued that Trump has gotten sucked into a needless war and Iran is winning by surviving the American onslaught. Some others have suggested Iran now has the high moral ground, particularly after US attacks killed children and civilians.

'Empty ships rushing to the United States to 'load up"

Although Trump claimed US has won the war and Strait of Hormuz "will soon be open", he betrayed uncertainty on this front in two other posts in which he boasted that "empty ships are rushing to the United States to 'load up'", implicitly acknowledging Iran succeeded in imperilling energy exports from West Asia.

"Massive numbers of completely empty oil tankers, some of the largest anywhere in the World, are heading, right now, to the United States to load up with the best and "sweetest" oil (and gas!) anywhere in the World. We have more oil than the next two largest oil economies combined - and higher quality. We are waiting for you. Quick turnaround!" he boasted, turning into a salesman for US energy.

Trump warns price gouging fertiliser monopoly

In another post, he warned that he was "watching fertilizer prices CLOSELY during our FIGHT FOR FREEDOM in Iran," and "the US will not accept PRICE GOUGING from the fertilizer monopoly", an implicit acknowledgement that the crisis was affecting American farmers.

As he keeps up a barrage of social media posts and statements that often contradict each other, critics are likening him to a senile grandpa who should be committed to a nursing home, while supporters maintain he is playing "4-D chess" with moves aimed at stamping American primacy on the world.

Claims of watching fertilizer prices closely during the "fight for freedom in Iran", is also being panned by critics who are calling out the "b.s" pointing out that he's actually heading out to Miami this weekend, reportedly to watch UFC, a mixed martial arts scrap that involves fighters beating each other in an octagonal cage, while Vance is engaged in high-stakes diplomacy.

For Vance, the Pakistan mission is a defining political gamble. Success — defined as stabilizing the ceasefire, reopening Strait of Hormuz, and sketching a path towards a broader agreement — would instantly elevate him into the top tier of Republican presidential contenders.

Vance-led team lands in Pakistan airbase India had targeted earlier

Surendra.Singh
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: A special aircraft carrying American peace delegation, led by US Vice-President JD Vance, landed on Saturday at Pakistan's Nur Khan base in Rawalpindi's Chakala for peace talks, the same airbase that was one of the key targets of India's missile strikes as part of Operation Sindoor last May. The Iranian team, led by Bagher Ghalibaf and Abbas Araghchi, also landed at the same airbase.

Boeing C-32A (designated as Air Force Two) carrying V-P Vance, escorted by Pakistan F16 jets, landed at the Nur Khan airbase at 10.29 am local time (0529 GMT). Two other aircraft carrying members of the US delegation and journalists also landed at Nur Khan base. Vance was accompanied by the US President's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner. Vance was received by Deputy PM and foreign minister Ishaq Dar and Army chief Asim Munir at the air base.

The Nur Khan airbase was chosen by the US delegation primarily for its proximity to Islamabad (25km from airbase), maximum security, logistical efficiency and its role as the key military transport and VIP aircraft landing hub.

The strategic air base, which houses key assets of the Pakistan Air Force, was damaged when India "conducted high-impact air operations".

Though India did not reveal the missiles used in the attack, reports and sources had then confirmed that BrahMos and SCALP air-launched missiles were used. Reports indicated that hangers, runways and radar sites were damaged in the Indian attack. Satellite imagery last Sept showed that Pakistan began work on rebuilding the targeted air base.

UK pauses Chagos handover deal after Trump criticism

Britain indicated Saturday it is shelving plans to return the Chagos Islands — which hosts the strategic Diego Garcia US-UK military base — to Mauritius, after US President Trump strongly criticised the deal.

Britain struck a deal with Mauritius last year to hand back the Indian Ocean islands to its former colony and pay to lease Diego Garcia, the largest island, home to the military base, for a century.

Trump condemned the return agreement as "an act of great stupidity" and on Saturday British media reported that Prime Minister Keir Starmer's govt would drop legislation needed to put the deal into effect.

Downing Street said in a statement: "We have always said we would only proceed with the deal if it has US support." Starmer's office issued the statement in response to reports that legislation underpinning the deal to return the Indian Ocean archipelago to Mauritius was due to run out of time in parliament and that no new Chagos bill would be brought forward.

A former top official said London had been effectively forced to abandon the plan as a result of Trump's opposition. "When the president of the United States is openly hostile, the govt has to rethink, so this agreement... will go into the deep freeze for the time being," Simon McDonald, previously the most senior civil servant in the Foreign Office, told BBC radio. AFP

Mauritius vows to reclaim islands

Mauritius foreign minister Dhananjay Ramful on Saturday vowed to "spare no effort" to reclaim the strategic Chagos Islands in the Indian Ocean. "We will spare no effort to seize any diplomatic or legal avenue to complete the decolonisation process in this part of the Indian Ocean," Ramful said at conference held in Mauritius. "This is a matter of justice," he added. Mauritius AG Gavin Glover said the outcome "does not come as a surprise", blaming it on strained relations between Trump and Starmer. AFP

US warships transit Strait of Hormuz in mine clearance op

Two US Navy warships have transited the Strait of Hormuz at the start of an operation to clear the strategic waterway of mines laid by Iran, US Central Command said Saturday.

The announcement — which marks the first such transit since the US-Israeli war with Iran began — came shortly after President Donald Trump said Washington had started "clearing out" the strait, through which a fifth of the world's crude oil passes.

"Today, we began the process of establishing a new passage and we will share this safe pathway with the maritime industry soon to encourage the free flow of commerce," said CENTCOM commander Admiral Brad Cooper.

The USS Frank E. Peterson and the USS Michael Murphy are the guided-missile destroyers involved in the operation, but CENTCOM said that "additional US forces including underwater drones" could join the effort in coming days. AFP

Hezbollah slams planned Lebanese talks with Israel as strikes kill 10

Hezbollah on Saturday renewed its rejection of direct negotiations between Israel and Lebanon, where authorities reported 10 people killed in the latest Israeli attacks in the south. The Israeli military said it had struck over 200 Hezbollah targets in Lebanon since Friday, among them rocket launchers.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun's office said on Friday that officials from his country, Israel and the United States would meet next week in Washington "to discuss declaring a ceasefire and the start date for negotiations between Lebanon and Israel under US auspices".

Hundreds of people gathered near the govt headquarters in central Beirut in support of Hezbollah and to protest against the talks with Israel. AP

Chinese, Egyptian, Saudi & Qatari officials in Islamabad to facilitate talks

▸ Continued from page 1

Iranian foreign minister Abbas Araghchi was also part of the delegation.

Since the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, the most direct US contact had been in Sept 2013 when President Barack Obama called newly elected President Hassan Rouhani to discuss Iran's nuclear programme. The recent highest-level meetings were between secretary of state John Kerry and his counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif during negotiations over the programme.

Iran doubled down on parts of its earlier proposal, with its delegation telling Iranian state television it had presented some of the plan's ideas as "red lines" in meetings with Sharif. Those included compensation for damage caused by the US-Israeli strikes that launched the war on Feb 28.

Reflecting the high stakes, officials from the region said Chinese, Egyptian, Saudi and Qatari officials were in Islamabad to indirectly facilitate the talks. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter. AGENCIES

STRAIT TALK: ALL BETS ON TABLE

With a fragile ceasefire holding and mistrust running deep, here's a lowdown on seven sore points that could make or break ongoing three-party talks in Pakistan — negotiations that could shape the future of West Asia

● What Iran wants ■ US/Israel position

● **Iran wants a ceasefire in Lebanon, where Israeli attacks on Iran-backed Hezbollah militants have killed nearly 2,000 people since the start of the fighting in March**
■ Israel and the US have said the Lebanon campaign is not part of the Iran-US ceasefire while Tehran insists it is

● **Iran wants the US to unblock Iranian assets and end sanctions that have crippled its economy for years**
■ Washington has indicated that it is open to significant sanctions relief but only in exchange for concessions from Iran on its nuclear and missile programmes

● **Iran wants acknowledgment of its authority over the Strait of Hormuz, where it aims to collect transit fees and control access in what would amount to a huge shift in regional power**
■ The US wants it opened for oil tankers and other traffic without any limitations, including tolls

● **Iran is expected to demand compensation for all damage during the six-week war**
■ The United States has not commented on this

People inspect remnants of an Iranian missile in Shadmot Mehola in the Jordanian valley, in the northern Israeli-occupied West Bank, on Thursday

● **Iran wants to be allowed to enrich uranium**
■ Washington has ruled it out and President Donald Trump has insisted it is non-negotiable

● **Tehran has said its formidable missile arsenal is non-negotiable**
■ Israel and the US both want Iran's missile capabilities to be dramatically curtailed

● **Iran wants withdrawal of US combat forces from the region, cessation of war on all fronts; a commitment to non-aggression**
■ The US President has vowed to retain military assets in West Asia until a peace deal is reached

Russia, Ukraine swap prisoners

Moscow: Russia and Ukraine exchanged 175 prisoners of war (PoWs) each as the 32-hour Easter truce announced by the Kremlin began at 4pm on Saturday. President Vladimir Putin on Thursday declared the 32-hour ceasefire over the Orthodox Easter weekend.

Apart from the 175 PoWs exchanged by both sides, Ukraine has also released seven Russian civilians, earlier taken hostage from the western region of Kursk, Russian state TV Rossia 24 said. More than an hour after its beginning, the truce was holding, it added. PTI

Pak military contingent lands in Saudi

Lahore: A Pakistani military contingent comprising around 13,000 soldiers and 10 to 18 jets has reached Saudi Arabia as part of a joint strategic defence agreement signed last year, the Gulf Kingdom said on Saturday.

The military contingent's deployment to King Abdulaziz Air Base in the Eastern Sector includes fighter jets and support aircraft from the Pakistan Air Force, according to a statement from Saudi defence ministry.

The deployment aimed to enhance joint military coordination, improve operational readiness between the armed forces of the two countries, and support security and stability at regional and international levels.

A Pakistan govt official also confirmed sending troops and jets to Saudi as part of the two countries' strategic defence agreement, under which any attack on one country would be considered an attack on another. PTI

Armed men blow up gas line in Baloch

Islamabad: Gas supply to Sibi district and its surrounding areas in Pakistan's Balochistan province was disrupted after unidentified armed men blew up a pipeline, according to officials, local media reported.

Citing sources, Pakistani daily Dawn reported that a four-inch-diameter gas pipeline exploded late Thursday night on the outskirts of Sibi town, which caught fire following the blast.

The engineers from Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) suspended the gas supply through the affected pipeline. Police and security forces, along with other law enforcement agencies, reportedly rushed to the site after receiving the information about the incident.

According to the authorities, an inspection is underway to ascertain the nature and cause of the explosion, with the area cordoned off and evidence being collected. IANS

New supreme leader has severe, disfiguring wounds, sources say

Dubai: Iran's new supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei is still recovering from severe facial and leg injuries suffered in the airstrike that killed his father at the beginning of the war, three people close to his inner circle told Reuters.

Khamenei's face was disfigured in the attack on the supreme leader's compound in central Tehran and he suffered a significant injury to one or both legs, all three sources said. The question of whether Khamenei's health lets him to run state affairs comes during Iran's moment of gravest peril for decades.

AFP

A handout from Iranian foreign ministry on Saturday shows Iran's parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf looking at the photos of the kids killed in US air raids on a school in Minab, Iran

The 56-year-old is recovering from his wounds and remains mentally sharp, according to the people, who requested anonymity to discuss the matter. He is taking part in meetings with officials via audio conferencing and is engaged in decision-making on major issues including the war and negotiations with Washington, two of them said. The accounts of the people close to Khamenei's inner circle provide the most detailed description of the leader's condition for weeks. Reuters couldn't independently verify their descriptions.

Iran's speaker carries photos of Minab victims

During the flight to Islamabad, Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Ghalibaf used the high-stakes journey to present a striking visual message. Inside the aircraft, several empty seats were arranged with photographs and personal belongings of victims of the Minab school strike, many of them children, who were killed in what Iran describes as a US attack.

Sharing the image on social media platform X, Ghalibaf wrote, "My companions on this flight, Minab 168", referring to the children and staff who lost their lives in the Feb 28 US-Israel strike on an elementary school in Minab.

The incident, which reportedly resulted in at least 165 deaths and left more than 100 injured, has emerged as a key reference point in Iran's narrative ahead of the negotiations, shaping its messaging on the international stage.

Upon arrival in Islamabad, Ghalibaf adopted a cautious stance, stating that Iran is entering the talks with "good intentions but no trust," according to Tasnim News Agency. REUTERS, IANS

Trump's peace board faces a cash crunch

Jerusalem/Cairo: Donald Trump's Board of Peace has received only a tiny fraction of the $17 billion pledged for Gaza, preventing the US president from pushing ahead with his plan for the shattered Palestinian enclave's future, sources told Reuters.

Ten days before US-Israeli attacks on Iran plunged the region into war, Trump hosted a conference in Washington that saw Gulf Arab states pledge billions for the governance and reconstruction of Gaza.

One of the sources, a person with direct knowledge of the peace board's operations, said that out of ten countries who pledged funds, only three — the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and the US itself — had contributed funding. The source said funding so far was under $1 billion, but did not give more details. The Iran war "has affected everything," exacerbating previous funding difficulties, the source said.

The plan envisages large-scale rebuilding of the coastal enclave after the disarmament of Palestinian militant group Hamas. The Board of Peace denied in a statement posted on social media on Friday that it had funding problems. REUTERS

DAILY PLANET

5 tonnes of cocaine seized at UK port

British border officials have seized around five tonnes of cocaine, with a street value of some $540 million, at one of London's main port terminals, the govt said on Saturday. The drugs were uncovered in a series of operations at London Gateway port in Feb and March, with the largest single haul, of almost 2,800 packets hidden in a banana shipment. "The smugglers went to extreme lengths to avoid detection — trying to replicate the exact shape and weight of banana boxes to conceal the drugs inside," the govt said.

Mob beats spiritual leader to death in Bangladesh

A self-proclaimed spiritual leader was beaten to death by a mob in Bangladesh on Saturday, officials said, in the latest violence fuelled by religious tensions in the country. Shamim Reza Jahangir, believed to be in his 60s, died of injuries after an old, allegedly blasphemous video of the man resurfaced online.

Pope to visit Algeria

Leo XIV will become the first pope to visit Algeria on Monday, taking a message of dialogue with Islam on a trip that also represents a personal pilgrimage for the American pontiff.

Musk accused of 'ambush' ahead of $100bn OpenAI trial

OpenAI says Elon Musk has changed direction on what he's seeking in his lawsuit against the startup in a "legal ambush" just weeks before trial. In a court filing Friday, it said the objectives Musk proposed earlier in the week appear to be aimed at "sandbagging the defendants and injecting chaos into the proceedings, while trying to recast his public narrative about his lawsuit."

Musk sued OpenAI and Microsoft in 2024 over claims that the maker of ChatGPT abandoned its founding mission as a research institution and became a for-profit business. He told the court in Jan he was seeking in the range of $79 billion to $134 billion in "wrongful gains" from his adversaries. BLOOMBERG

Colombia slaps 100% tariffs on Ecuador

Colombia slapped 100% tariffs on Ecuadorean imports Friday in response to a similar move by its neighbour a day before, the govt said. The two countries are engaged in a trade war for months now. AFP

Under Trump's Nasa, moon rocket from Boeing faces uncertain future

Nasa's Boeing rocket just propelled astronauts farther into space than ever before, but the Trump administration is looking to competitors for a replacement. About a week before the $24 billion Space Launch System (SLS) pushed the four crew members of the Artemis II mission around the moon, Nasa asked Boeing rivals what options they could offer for its ambitious plan of future lunar trips.

It echoed almost immediately in White House's budget request, put a big question mark on the future of Boeing's beleaguered rocket after a decade of development.

The fate of the programme — worth tens of billions of dollars over the next few years — has become a key test for Jared Isaacman, the billionaire fintech entrepreneur who Trump named to run Nasa last year, in his efforts to make the space agency faster and more efficient.

He's counting on companies like SpaceX to provide cheaper alternatives to the costly systems by legacy players like Boeing and Lockheed Martin. "Because that programme draws on such history, has contractors, hundreds of subcontractors, tens of thousands of people, it's expensive," Isaacman said in Feb. "It's not the vehicle that you are going to take to and from the moon a couple of times a year as you build out a moon base the way the president wants."

That network of support — Artemis counts suppliers in all 50 states — has helped SLS survive efforts to kill it over years of delays.

Last week, the White House said it will try again to find commercial replacements. With a 2028 deadline looming to land astronauts on the moon before Trump leaves office and China planning its own mission by the end of the decade, Isaacman is under pressure to deliver. Although legacy providers like Boeing have struggled to meet deadlines in the past, their technologies are proven. New rivals like SpaceX and Blue Origin are yet to show their rockets can get to the moon. BLOOMBERG

AFP

OVER THE MOON... People gather for a livecast of the return of Artemis II crew, at the San Diego Air and Space Museum on Friday

'It's OK to howl at Moon': Why Nasa streamed Artemis flight on Twitch

When Nasa flight director Zebulon Scoville was working a shift during the uncrewed Artemis I test flight, he realised the space agency wasn't consistently livestreaming the spacecraft's journey.

"They said, well, we don't have bandwidth, we've got to get all this vehicle and engineering data down," Scoville recalled. "I was like — wrong." "This program will be over if people don't buy it and they don't come with us."

Scoville spent two years figuring out how better to take the public on Nasa's —new Moon missions. That included adding an optical communications system onto the Orion spacecraft, a laser that transmitted to a ground station on Earth, sending streaming video in higher resolution.

Throughout the more than **nine-day Artemis II crewed test flight — which ended Friday with an emotional splashdown off the California coast** — Nasa has maintained live programming on its own streaming platform and across social media. That, combined with third-party streamers and broadcast news, has earned millions of views.

Institutions including museums held Artemis splashdown parties. Alex Roethler, a Wisconsin physics teacher, said: "I love having the livestream available for my students. I also think it's cool that they use Twitch," the streamer site favoured by gamers.

The crew were integral to the storytelling. During the nearly seven-hour lunar flyby, astronauts Christina Koch, Victor Glover, Jeremy Hansen and Reid Weisman gave near-literary descriptions of lunar surface features and left Houston awestruck. With Artemis II, there have been "just smiles and actually showing emotion through Nasa, where we have sometimes had a history of being a little bit dry," Scoville said. "It's okay to jump up and down and howl at the moon," he added. AFP

Sam Altman hints 'AI anxiety' behind attack on his SFO home

New Delhi: OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said Saturday a suspect hurled a Molotov cocktail at his San Francisco residence in the US, supposedly due to anger against tech leaders amid rising public anxiety about artificial intelligence (AI).

Altman posted on his personal blog a photograph of his private life and his child, following a dual-pronged attack targeting both the residence and the office of Altman. "The first person did it last night, at 3.45am. Thankfully it bounced off the house and no one got hurt," the CEO wrote.

He described his family as "shaken" by the incident.

The San Francisco Police Department confirmed the arrest of a 20-year-old man in connection with the attack. The suspect reportedly fled after hurling a Molotov cocktail. He later went to OpenAI's San Francisco office and threatened to torch its premises.

Altman called for a societal response and policy measures to help navigate through a difficult economic transition tied to technological change, to get to a much better future. IANS

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TIMES evoke

THE WOODS WERE LOVELY, DARK AND DEEP...

In days of frenzied war and fragile peace, when self-important men decide the fate of millions of beings, it might seem out of the way to talk of forests — but it isn't. So many of us, wrapped in smugness and slyness, cruelty and dryness, have forgotten how miniscule we humans are, compared to the nature we so unthinkingly destroy. Forests first appeared on Earth 390 million years ago. The earliest fossils, dating to the Devonian period, show trees with wispy trunks and non-woody tissue, resembling thin palms instead of grand banyans or oaks. There were no birds or animals — only millipede-like insects moved around, while the trees waited another 150 million years for the first dinosaurs to arrive.

Importantly, the birth of forests brought the revolution of life — earlier, carbon dioxide (CO_2) levels on Earth were too high for plant life to develop into more than ferns. In the Devonian period, however, CO_2 levels began to drop and plants developed stronger roots and arching branches. Megaphyll leaves emerged, fitting in more pores or stomata to absorb CO_2 — and produce oxygen. As trees — scaling to forests — breathed out oxygen, conditions for life on Earth strengthened. Eventually, six million years ago, the first humans came along. Forests were humanity's first home — even after we left their leafy environs, we returned constantly for water, wood, medicine and energy. After all, from the Carboniferous period, 300 million years ago, a critical mass of trees had perished, lying in layers, forming peat. Under sand and mud, pressure and heat, water and gases were squeezed out from this, leading to the formation of coal. Once humans discovered power here, the world was transformed. Ironically, that transformation threatened the very source of this power — forests. Over the last 10,000 years, the world lost one-third of its forest cover — since 1990, Earth has been denuded of 10% forest coverage, over 400 million hectares, as human need — and greed — have only grown.

Forests have been cut down for essential farming — and for growing, mining and drilling all manner of trivialities, ancient trees ripped up for the thrills of scented candles, paper napkins and phone covers. Imagine the travesty of destroying a forest, millions of years old, holding the secret to life on Earth, for an artificial sweetener. Yet, this mindlessness now veils our understanding of nature — which we must correct. Hence, dear reader, TE's global experts highlight the majesty and mysteries of forests, suggesting we observe our remaining woods with some awe. Forests, once dark and deep, are the very reason we arose from interstellar sleep — let's keep them standing.

'Russia, although awed by its forests, tried to dominate these, with surprising results'

***Sophie Pinkham** is Professor of the Practice, Comparative Literature, Cornell University. Speaking with Srijana Mitra Das at **Times Evoke**, she discusses the rich forest life of Russia — and why it inspires humility:*

What is the core of your research?

■ My book, 'The Oak and the Larch: A Forest History of Russia and its Empires', tells the story of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation and the different places conquered by Russia over the centuries. I describe this from the perspective of the forest and environment, beginning with the Neolithic period, going forward to the forest in the current invasion of Ukraine by Russia.

How are forests perceived in Russia?

■ Once Slavic power moved from Kyiv after the Mongol invasion to central Russia, its heartland was in a densely forested area. So, the forest was at the heart of Russian culture from its beginning. For early Russians, the forest was essential for timbre, firewood, energy, building materials, food and pelts that helped Russia become an economic power. But the forest was also a source of threat — there was this dichotomy of need with great danger.

That tension — affection and fear — continued into the techno-utopianism of the Soviet period, when leaders fantasised about making nature subservient to human wishes. There was fear, even hate, of forests, rivers and other natural features that weren't serving human purposes. There was aggressive rhetoric in the Soviet period about declaring war on 'useless forests'. Russian ambivalence to the forest tells us about broader human relationships to the natural environment.

We see this in contemporary Russia.

Photos: Getty Images & iStock

LEAFING THROUGH TIME: Russia is the only country on Earth to have both subtropical forests and Arctic tundra — its forests have played an enormous role in its economic power, cosmologies, politics and artistic world, encompassing Tolstoy to Stalin

There is rhetorical celebration of the forest, countryside and traditional architecture. For Russian nationalists, the forest is a location of true Russian identity. There's a strong strain of 'econationalism'. Meanwhile, there is considerable mistreatment of Russia's forests — almost one-fifth of the world's forest cover, playing a very important ecological role for the planet. Alongside illegal logging, there have been reports of plans to clear-cut the forests around Lake Baikal, a huge freshwater lake, to build ski lodges. It's a classic story of commercial greed at the expense of an irreplaceable natural treasure.

HIS-TREES

You say 'Russia has more trees than there are stars in the galaxy' — please elaborate?

■ I wanted to highlight the unbelievable vastness of Russia's territory, both in scale and variety. Russia is the only country that encompasses both Arctic tundra and subtropical forests — there is great variety even within that. The title of my book, 'The Oak and the Larch', gestures towards a principal duality of Russian forests. The oak is a deciduous tree, symbolising righteousness and strength, worshipped in early Slavic society. It's the most iconic tree of the beautiful deciduous forests of European Russia, immortalised by Tolstoy and Turgenev.

Meanwhile, the 'larch' is a symbol of Siberia, the taiga or boreal — that's a much harsher ecosystem. It's very cold, swampy and vast. It's commonly understood that if you get lost in the taiga, you can easily perish — but the larch has become a symbol of survival. I write about gulag prisoners often put near the taiga to cut wood — the forest literally kept them alive. People facing lethal malnutrition found vitamin-laden berries in the forest. On a metaphorical level, the larch and dwarf pine became symbols of resilience.

Can you tell us about climate change in Russia today?

■ Climate change is a serious threat to many of Russia's landscapes and ecological balance. It's affecting water supply, making permafrost melt and forests drier — the fires seen in Russia over the last 10 years have been unprecedented in recorded history.

So, is there a Russian environmental politics?

■ Given the political situation since 2022, many environmental activists have had to leave. It's dangerous to oppose the government and there's been a great decline in ecological activism, as with other kinds of resistance. But there are many ordinary Russians who treasure nature and who, in the case of plans to clear-cut the shores of Lake Baikal, for instance, fought back, saying, 'This is part of our national heritage and we must protect it.' So, this is not without hope.

Also, because smaller-scale provincial ecological activism is not necessarily linked to western NGOs or broader geopolitical agendas, there is more room for people to protest that in Russia than, for example, to oppose the war in Ukraine.

What role do animals and birds play in Russian imagination?

■ An important aspect in Russian nature writing is how central hunting was — there's this tension here between admiring the beauty of the natural landscape and killing animals like the pheasant, grouse, etc. The taiga has an entirely different set of animals, including the Siberian tiger and bears. I have written about a Russian ecologist who devoted his life to rescuing orphaned bears, whose mothers were killed by hunters, trying to get them back to the wild. Bears are emblematic of the forest — that's why the Russian national identity is often described as 'the Russian bear', linked to notions of power and danger.

BERRY INTERESTING: Humans and bears need forest wealth

BEAR ESSENTIAL: An icon of Russia itself

The bear occupies an ecological niche extremely close to humans in these northern forests. Bears look a little like humans. They can walk on their hind legs, grab things with their hands and seek honey, which, like berries, was one of the most important forest products for early Slavs. There are stories in Russian folklore about seeking honey or berries and running into a bear looking for these too — here, the bear is a rival. This interaction is about survival — some indigenous peoples of the boreal have elaborate bear ceremonies around coexistence and harmony. The more European approach has been to kill the bear — or assert dominance on it. That's what 'dancing bears' are about — if you had a bear as your plaything, you've shown you are the master. The bear as the symbol of Russia in political iconography reflects a long-standing idea that Russians represent something that isn't fully civilised. There is an Orientalist tradition of thinking about Russia as this 'bear neighbour' who hasn't been chained and taught to dance yet.

The Russian state tried dominating ecology — did nature ever beat it?

■ Absolutely. There was this tremendous hubris in Russia that they could 'tame' nature — with very unsatisfactory results. Imperial Russia tried importing cutting-edge German forestry methods but found it impossible to use these in vast Russia — even today, many areas of the Russian forest remain untouched. In Russian Karelia, you see a striking difference on the Finnish versus Russian side. The Finns have exploited their forests — Russia has much more wildness. So, some animals managed to survive.

In the imperial period, Tolstoy became a forest advocate, linked to a deforestation crisis when tree-cutting was followed by erosion, drying of lands, etc. Later, there was a Soviet plan to make huge agricultural fields in Central Asia by using the Aral Sea as irrigation — that caused the almost complete drying-up of the Aral Sea, with very shocking images of a sea that just disappeared. I wrote about Stalin's 'Great Plan for the Transformation of Nature' as well — under this bombastic program, Stalin decided he would plant huge forests to protect Russia from what was seen as 'uncivilised Central Asian winds'. However, Stalin found you can't suddenly plant enormous forests where they've never grown before. Such attempts to tame nature for human purposes make a history of unintended consequences — it should teach us respect for nature and its unknowns.

FOREST COVER ON EARTH

Russia leads nations with enormous forest resources — how these are valued will decide the future

Photos: iStock

WILD THINGS...

● Forests are full — or should be — of astonishing beings with powers we can only dream of. **Spider monkeys,** residents of **forest canopies in Central and South America,** have prehensile or 'capable-of-grasping' **tails which function like a fifth limb** — they enable 'brachiation' or swinging, the tail supporting them while they use their hands to reach for fruit and nuts. There are **7 species of spider monkeys — all risk extinction now due to habitat loss and hunting**

● The **lovely rosy maple moth** is found in **deciduous forests of eastern North America, living on maple trees** — at a tiny wingspan of 3 cms, the difference between boys and girls can be spotted from the former's heavier **antennae** and the latter's slender set. Nocturnal and solitary, the rosy maple moth ranges from **pale yellow to bright pink** — the bright colours are **a bluff of toxicity, aposematism warning off predators,** without dropping a single bomb

● The **Andean Cock of the Rock lives in cloud forests in Peru,** nesting on rocky ledges — 13 inches long, it has **a startling call but is shy,** avoiding humans coveting its wonderful plumage. **Males perform an elaborate plumage display in 'leks',** large groups where 'confrontations' occur, the birds bowing and snapping their bills to impress. **Living 7,000 feet above humans, so far, this wild thing can still freely sing**

Research: National Geographic, Smithsonian Magazine, BBC Earth, IFAW, Encyclopedia Britannica

'From rhinos in Harappa to ancient war elephants, forests and their beings shaped India's historical identity'

***Mahesh Rangarajan** is Professor of History and Environmental Studies at Ashoka University. He speaks with Srijana Mitra Das in TE about the great Indian forest — and how this and its many beings have survived:*

Mahesh Rangarajan recently co-edited 'India's Forests: Revisiting Nature and History' with Arupjyoti Saikia. What do forests mean, TE asks the environmental historian, at a time when many people have not directly experienced one? Rangarajan replies, 'In most countries, forests are much less than they once were but forests mean different things to different people. It depends on the individual, group, time and larger context. Our new book travels from a prehistory of India to the contemporary period — over that time, the meaning of 'the forest' changed considerably.'

At first, there was great closeness between human existence and what is now considered 'the wild'. Rangarajan says, 'In prehistory, there was intensive contact between humans, forests and large animals. Think of the rock art of Bhimbetka, the Paleolithic and Mesolithic Vindhyan cave paintings in Madhya Pradesh. These show a tiger in close proximity to human beings. You could not separate the habitations of large forest animals from humans situated on the edges of thickets. Imagine how 'the forest' changed for these animals, particularly in the Indian subcontinent where the density of humans to land area rose dramatically. A paper in our book refers to lions and 'unicorns' in India, meaning the rhinoceros unicornis which even showed up on Harappan seals in 2500 BC. The lion was very widespread in its forest range until the 19th century, spread from far south to the east. Now, lions are mostly found in Gujarat while the rhino exists only in Assam and Bengal. The forest homes of these animals have shrunk while the habitations of humans have expanded.'

GRASS-EATERS: Blackbucks on savannahs

Rangarajan adds, 'However, it's not like the forest has ended. There are still liminal spaces shared between flora, fauna and humans. There are regions in India where the forest remains part of human experience and sensibility, continuing to play a very important ecological and economic role, often most directly experienced by the poor.'

Are there different kinds of Indian forests? Rangarajan explains, 'There are diverse understandings. The Forest Act of 1878, for instance, officially defined government-owned forest land as 'forest'. This government category also has distinctions, such as places the government has full property rights or reserved forests, unclassed forests and civil or revenue lands handed over for cultivation versus protected forests where some rights are defined and some aren't.' There are also botanical descriptions. Rangarajan says, 'The 1968 book 'A Revised Survey of the Forest Types of India', by Sir Harry Champion and Shiam Kishore Seth, offered some interesting categories, such as 'dry deciduous forests' and 'moist deciduous forests'. There are also 'wet evergreen forests', now called 'rainforests', in places where it rains 200 centimetres a year, like the Western Ghats and parts of the Northeast.'

JUNGLE BOOKS

STILL POWERING MANY: As fossil fuels are fickle, forests give some energy

However, Rangarajan mentions, 'This categorisation looks at forests only in terms of trees though. Both authors were foresters and forestry then was largely about timber and wood. So, many areas they classified as 'wastelands' would now actually be called 'thorn forests' — Jayashree Ratnam of the National Centre for Biological Sciences argues they could be called savannah. Hence, we need to be broader in our classifications, looking perhaps at uncultivated land, grassland to tree-dotted savannah to mature tree forest.'

Photos: iStock

ROOTS & BRANCHES: From a place of beauty and magic to a rich resource for animals, herbs, shrubs and trees, the forest has played a central role in the imagination of India

The forest is also not the impenetrable mass some imagine. Rangarajan says, 'A common urban misapprehension now is that the forest is a tangle, a puzzle of vines and vegetation, primeval or untouched. However, it is crucial to remember humans have been in these areas for a very long time. We used fire — and many of these forests were sculpted by this over millennia. Just as India has about 35,000 types of flowering plants, it has huge diversity in jungles, forest floors and microclimates. There is a saying in Rajasthan about the difference between Marwar and Mewar being babul in the first area to amla in the second — you'd know the boundary of the two microclimates upon crossing from woods of babul into amla. The forest here is mapped both by folk and state memory.'

Foresters in India classified thickets largely by looking at the rich troves of trees — timber, teak, sal, sheesham, pine, deodar, etc. — found in distinct regions. Rangarajan points out, 'Today, notions of the forest include more — flora, herbs, shrubs and grasses also compose these. Think of the wild buffalo, ancestor of our domestic buffalos, and rhino, both grasseaters. The blackbuck or 'krishna mrigha' also eats grass in forests. Each of these animals has a relationship with human life, in ceremonial, religious, livelihood or regal ways. So, the forest and its many elements form part of Indian daily life.'

Was there a rupture when colonialism arrived? Rangarajan considers, 'There was certainly a colonial phase which looms large over us. The Forest Department itself was created in 1864. Many of our forest laws derecognised property rights. The zamindari abolition debate was a big question into the 1950s, around the issue of land to the tiller — the equivalent did not take place with forests though. Many people resided there without land rights — the forest department sought their labour as forest products became a valued commercial resource. Hence, an entirely different way of life continued in forests.'

However, strong state laws governed forests even in pre-colonised India. 'The Arthashastra, which dates around the 3rd century BC, has important notions of forests. There is the 'mrigavana' or forest area for the recreation of the king and the 'gajavana' for resources — this included the all-important war elephant. There was a complex power structure and sets of rules involving kings, forests, people, products and animals. The forest was very much a part of the kingly state. Hunting was important to rulers, from Rani Durgawati to Jahangir, to show their power over territory, protect their citizens and distribute gains, creating circles of resources, extraction, domination and protection.'

So, what does 'the forest' mean in contemporary India? Rangarajan says, 'It is, of course, a huge economic resource — and far more. It is a place of imagination and discovery for many. There are regions where the sense of a forest is critical to a sense of self. The Chipko Andolan of 1973, just some decades ago, showed how important forests were to hill people. One aspect of being Uttarakhandi was the power of the village to decide what happened to forests. A sense of community stemming from forests still exists. For many, the forest remains part of a historically evolved identity.' TE hopes that rootedness, binding people and animals, from lush grasses to swaying canopies, will always prevail.

HARAPPA TO HERE... Rhino forests shrank

READERS WRITE

Dear Times Evoke,

I am sending you my immense gratitude for the mesmerisingly beautiful feature on oceanic mapping (15th March) with Sara Caputo! Maps are such fabulous resources — they extend our imagination and open doors to traverse the world. The next time maps are referred to, a lot of thought in my mind will come into play about their creation, evolution and numerous iterations.

—Parul Bhandari, Noida

Apropos TE's in-depth column with Sara Caputo, it is true that knowledge often fosters arrogance as its flipside. Since over 70% of Earth is oceanic, mapping the seas was inevitable. However, using this knowledge for judiciously tapping marine natural resources, with deep concern for the environment, has become critical now. Thank you, TE, for bringing us such thought-provoking articles every week.

—Amit Tiwari, Amethi

TE's insightful interview with Susan Jebb (4th April) offered valuable advice for people gaining weight — don't let obesity defeat you. The key lies in the right food, proper portions and exercise. Controlling obesity is tougher than quitting smoking but the crucial step is motivation. Let's decide to become a healthier nation!

—Col. Gopal Verma, Delhi

TE's article titled 'Humans are fatter than ever before' with Susan Jebb was exciting. It explained how our evolution is now causing overeating, driving many ailments. While GLP-1 drugs can help, healthier diets, local foods and exercise remain central. Looking at menus these days, I fervently hope as more people highlight food value, restaurants will focus on real nutrition and not just pander to our tastebuds.

—Malashri Sen, Kolkata

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Leverkusen sink Dortmund

Robert Andrich's first-half strike gave Bayer Leverkusen a 1-0 win at Borussia Dortmund on Saturday, edging Bayern Munich closer to a record-extending 35th Bundesliga title.

Leverkusen became just the second team to beat Dortmund in the league this season and moved one point behind fourth-placed Stuttgart. Dortmund remain eight points clear in second place despite their four-game winning streak coming to an end.

A day after extending his deal at the club to 2031, Nico Schlotterbeck received a smattering of boos and whistles

BUNDESLIGA

from the home fans amid reports he had a release clause for this summer inserted into his contract. Stoic and risk averse under coach Niko Kovac this season, Dortmund were uncharacteristically fluid in attack in the opening half hour but Andrich broke through for the visitors in simple fashion. The Germany midfielder intercepted a Ramy Bensebaini pass and took a touch before blasting a low shot into the bottom corner past Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel.

Results: Heidenheim 3 (Honsak 9, 36, Zivzivadze 79) bt Union Berlin 1 (Querfeld 75); Wolfsburg 1 (Pejcinovic 90+7) lost to Eintracht Frankfurt 2 (Hojlund 21, Kalimuendo-Muinga 32); RB Leipzig 1 (Diomande 80) bt Borussia Moenchengladbach 0; Borussia Dortmund 0 lost to Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Andrich 42). AGENCIES

ARSENAL SUFFER TITLE JOLT

Bournemouth Halt Hosts' Charge; Everton Hold Brentford

Arsenal suffered a painful blow to their Premier League title hopes with a 2-1 home defeat by Bournemouth, while in the battle of unlikely top-five contenders Brentford and Everton battled out a 2-2 draw on Saturday.

Alex Scott's winner for Bournemouth at The Emirates threw the title race wide open as leaders Arsenal laboured to a first league defeat in nine games. The London club remain nine points clear of second-placed Manchester City, but Pep Guardiola's side have two games in hand starting with Sunday's trip to Chelsea and host Arsenal next weekend.

FOOTBALL

"Extremely disappointing. It's a big punch in the face," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said. "We were very far from the level that we're expecting, that's for sure."

In their first Premier League match for almost a month, Arsenal could have built a 12-point cushion with six games left to play, but could have few complaints as Bournemouth emerged with a deserved three points to boost their European hopes. Bournemouth took the lead when 19-year-old Eli Junior Kroupi turned in a deflected cross at the far post in the 17th minute.

The French youngster has now scored 10 times in the top flight this season -- the first teenager to reach that mark in his debut campaign in the Premier League since Robbie Keane for Coventry City in the 1999-2000 season.

Arsenal struggled to respond but got a helping hand when Bournemouth's Ryan Christie was adjudged to have blocked a shot with his arm, allowing Viktor Gyokeres to equalise from the spot in the 35th -- his 11th goal in all competitions this year.

The anxious hosts huffed and puffed in search of a winner and Gyokeres had a goal disallowed but it was Bournemouth who struck again as Scott was played in by Evanilson and finished calmly past David Raya in the 74th minute.

Brighton & Hove Albion kept their own European ambitions alive as they beat Burnley 2-0 with a double from Mats Wieffer at Turf Moor, which moved his side to 46 points. It was a third successive league win for Brighton while second-from-bottom Burnley look almost certain to be relegated as they are 12 points off the safety zone with six games left.

Reuters

ALL SMILES: Bournemouth's Junior Kroupi celebrates with James Hill

REAL MADRID HELD

Real Madrid dropped more points in the Spanish title race with a frustrating 1-1 La Liga draw at home against Girona on Friday. Fede Valverde drilled Alvaro Arbeloa's side ahead early in the second half but Thomas Lemar's fine strike secured a point for the Catalan visitors at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Results: EPL: Arsenal 1 (Gyokeres 35-pen) lost to Bournemouth 2 (Kroupi 17, Scott 74); Brentford 2 (Thiago 3-pen, 76) drew with Everton 2 (Beto 26, Dewsbury-Hall 90+1); Burnley 0 lost to Brighton 2 (Wieffer 43, 89). **La Liga:** Real Sociedad 3 (Sucic 14, Sivera 27-og, Oskarsson 60) drew with Alaves 3 (Caleta-Car 3-og, Diabate 24, Boye 90+8); Elche 1 (Cepeda 73) bt Valencia 0. **On Friday:** Real Madrid 1 (Valverde 51) Girona 1 (Lemar 62) **Serie A:** Cagliari 1 (Esposito 63) bt Cremonese 0; Torino 2 (Simeone 6, Casadei 50) bt Verona 1 (Bowie 38). AGENCIES

The big victories will be a confidence booster: Chopda

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Bengaluru: After suffering a back injury late November, India shuttler Ayush Shetty's pre-season was severely hit. He was advised to take rest for around four weeks. The 20-year-old underwent rehabilitation with his team of physios and trainers at the Centre for Badminton Excellence (CBE), formerly known as PPBA, here. Even though he featured in the season opener at the Malaysia Open in January, doubts over his fitness lingered.

Fast forward to April, Shetty's hard work behind the scenes and patience has bor-

QUOTE UNQUOTE

ne fruit. The Mangaluru shuttler, who suffered four first round exits in the first quarter of the year, has been at his menacing best in the Badminton Asia Championships in Ningbo, China. On Saturday, Ayush rallied a superbly to score a 10-21, 21-19, 21-17 win over defending champion and World No. 1 Kunlavut Vitidsarn in the semifinals to set up a date with World No 2. Shi Yu Qi of China in the final. He thus became the first Indian male singles player after Dinesh Khanna to reach the BAC final.

AFP

RAMPAGING FORM: Ayush Shetty marched into the final

"Due to his rehab, Ayush lost out on that critical period where other players could prepare for the 2026 season. Besides defeating top players, he played back-to-back tough matches in succession this week at the highest level, and did not complain of any major back pain, which is a good sign. The credit should also go to the trainers and physios, who worked with him tirelessly during his rehab," Sagar Chopda, head coach at CBE, told TOI.

Ayush, ranked no 25 in the BWF circuit, beat top stars, including Li Shi Feng (7, China), Chi Yu Jen (20, Chinese Taipei), Jonatan Christie (4, Indonesia) as he stormed into the title-decider. With such consistent performances, Ayush, who won the US Open 300 last year, has proved that he belongs to the elite circuit.

"With this performance, his ranking will further improve. More importantly, it will act as a confidence booster when you beat such quality and top-ranked players. This week has been remarkable for him. He will become more confident that he can win big tournaments. I am sure that this is just the beginning for him," Chopda said.

"There is one more match (final) to go and we are just keeping our fingers crossed."

10-man Blues go down to Blasters

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Bengaluru: For all the Kerala Blasters fans who skipped Saturday's match in protest against the management, it was a big missed chance as the visitors shocked Bengaluru FC 2-1, their first win ever at the Sree Kanteerava stadium, in an Indian Super League clash.

BFC started as favourites against Blasters, who were fac-

ISL

ing relegation, down in 13th place in the 14-team league. The Blues took lead in the 28th minute following an own goal by Senegalese defender Fallou Ndiaye, who was trying to close down Sunil Chhetri who was primed to score.

The match was going BFC's way big time but the home side went a man down following a direct red card to Argentine medio Brian Sanchez in the 34th minute. Referee Pratik Mondal first showed a yellow to Blasters' Matias Miruena before flashing the red to Sanchez who was pulled for his head on challenge on the Spaniard.

It was a lucky break for Blasters who battled for the equaliser with an extra player advantage. But even with 10 men, BFC still proved to be a handful for the visitors.

After changing ends, BFC had a clear chance to double their lead but Ryan Williams, who moved in through the right past his last marker, fired wide from close. Slowly, Blasters fought their way back and as expected it was medio Ebindas Yesudasan who pulled the strings moving up through the right with ease. At the hour mark, Ebindas again worked his way up and found striker Victor Bertomeu at the top of the box. The Spaniard quickly moved in beating a feeble challenge from Rahul Bheke and fired in the equaliser past Gurpreet Singh Sandhu.

Even as the packed stands, mostly Blue for a change with only a few hundreds in yellow, tried their best to get their team back in front, BFC paid the price for playing with one man down for more than 60 minutes. Blasters found the winner in the 79th minute when substitute Francisco Abalo, another Spaniard, threaded in the goal through the legs of Sandhu.

BFC desperately tried to find the equaliser. But at the end it was a winning return for Blasters' coach Ashley Westwood, former BFC gaffer, to Kanteerava even as Pep Munoz began his journey with a defeat that would take some time to sink in. Despite their first win in eight matches, Blasters remained in 13th place and BFC, who conceded their second defeat this season, remained fourth.

Syed Asif

ECSTATIC: Kerala Blasters players celebrate their win over BFC

Results: Bengaluru FC 1 (Fallou Ndiaye 28-og) lost to Kerala Blasters 2 (Victor Bertomeu 60, Fancisco Abalo 79); Chennaiyin FC 1 (Irfan Yadwad 28) lost to East Bengal 3 (Edmund Lalrindika 7, Bipin Singh 83, Nandha Kumar 90+6). **Today's matches:** Inter Kashi vs Mohammedan Sporting (5 pm); Mohun Bagan Super Giant vs Punjab FC (7.30 pm).

Sujeet, Abhimanyou clinch gold for India

New Delhi: India struck gold at the ongoing Asian wrestling championships with commanding performances from Sujeet Kalkal and Abhimanyou, who clinched the men's freestyle 65kg and 70kg titles respectively in Bishkek on Saturday.

Kalkal delivered a clinical display to outclass Uzbekistan's Umidjon Jalolov 8-1 in a one-sided final, show-

ASIAN WRESTLING

casing tactical maturity and composure. Abhimanyou, meanwhile, registered a major upset by defeating Mongolia's two-time World medallist and Olympian Tulga Tumur Ochir 5-3 in a closely fought title bout.

Later, Sandeep Mann added a silver medal after a gritty performance, narrowly losing 1-2 to Japan's Keyvan Ghadaghi in the 79kg final.

Sujeet Kalkal/Instagram

Kalkal, who had already impressed this year with two Ranking Series titles, secured his maiden senior Asian crown to add to his earlier successes as a U20 and U23 Asian champion.

Also advancing to their respective finals were Aman Sehrawat and Mukul Dahiya. Sehrawat edged past Iran's Ahmad Mohammadnezhadjavan 11-9 in the 61kg semis, while Dahiya defeated Kazakhstan's Bolat Sakayev 12-6 in the 86kg category. TNN

Compound trio team win gold

Puebla (Mexico): Indian compound women's trio of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Madhura Dhamangaonkar and Pragati edged past USA 233-232 to clinch the gold medal at Archery World Cup Stage 1 here on Saturday.

The medal, India's first in the season-opening meet, came as a saving grace as none of the recurve and

ARCHERY WC

men's compound archers were on target. As a team, the men's recurve side made an opening-round exit, losing to Spain in straight sets. The women's team gold medal clash was a see-saw battle. India conceded their opening-round lead and trailed in the second (114-117) and third ends (173-174). But the trio held their nerve, producing six perfect arrows in the final end to edge the USA by a solitary point. PTI

SNAP SHOTS

SAINYAM ENDS FIFTH

Forrmer junior world and Asian champion Sainyam, recorded her best ever finish at an ISSF World Cup, claiming a creditable fifth place in the women's 10m air pistol final in Granada, Spain. Sainyam shot 178.9 in the final. Reigning Asian Games champion Palak also made the final and finished seventh, bowing out after the 14th shot of the 24-shot final with a score of 137.9.

Andreeva to face Potapova: Russian top seed Mirra Andreeva eased into her second WTA final of the year with a straight-sets victory over Romania's Elena-Gabriela Ruse in Linz on Saturday. The 18-year-old won 6-4, 6-1 in Austria to set up a Sunday meeting with home favourite Anastasia Potapova. Andreeva has a 2-1 winning record against Potapova, taking their last two meetings in straight sets. Russian-born Potapova, who switched allegiance to Austria at the start of the season, saw off Croatian Donna Vekic 6-4, 6-2 in the second semifinal.

Hawks clinch playoff berth: CJ McCollum scored 25 of his game-high 29 points in the first half and Dyson Daniels collected 13 points, 10 rebounds and 12 assists as the Atlanta Hawks clinched a playoff spot with a 124-102 rout of Cleveland Cavaliers on Friday. **Results:** Lakers 101 bt Suns 73; 76ers 105 bt Pacers 94; Pistons 118 bt Hornets 100; Bucks 125 bt Nets 108; Nuggets 127 bt Thunder 107; Jazz 147 bt Grizzlies 101; Kings 124 bt Warriors 118; Heat 140 bt Wizards 117; Knicks 112 bt Raptors 95; Trail Blazers 116 bt Clippers 97; Magic 127 bt Bulls 103; Spurs 139 bt Mavericks 120; Celtics 144 bt Pelicans 118; Timberwolves 136 bt Rockets 132.

'Building a sporting culture will attract more youth': The Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports Mansukh Mandaviya stressed on the need for building a Commonwealth Games legacy. "The nationwide campaign of building a sporting culture among youngsters will act as a catalyst to attract more youth towards sports and build a bench strength that will support our 2036 Olympic dreams," Mandaviya said during his meeting with a delegation led by Commonwealth president Donald Rukare.

India lose to Kenya: The Indian women's team dished out a mediocre performance to lose 0-2 to lower-ranked Kenya in the semifinal of the FIFA Series 2026 in Nairobi on Saturday. Martha Emedot (2) and Tereza Obunya (55) scored for the hosts. The match also saw Indian captain Pyari Xaxa sustain a head injury in the 14th minute. She was taken to the hospital.

Alcaraz vs Sinner in Monte Carlo final

Carlos Alcaraz lined up a blockbuster Monte Carlo Masters final with chief rival Jannik Sinner after the Spaniard ended the run of local boy Valentin Vacherot in the last four on Saturday. Alcaraz saw off Vacherot 6-4, 6-4 to stay on track to defend his title and set up a Sunday showdown with Sinner for the world number one ranking.

It will be the first meeting this season between the world's top two players and

TENNIS

will decide who will be world No.1 come Monday when the new ATP rankings are released. "I think it's the dream spot for everyone I would say. I'm fighting for a second Monte Carlo title, he's fighting for his first one," said Alcaraz of Sunday's final.

"It's going to be a really special one. The No.1 is on the line, which will make tomorrow even more special."

The 22-year-old Alcaraz is trying to keep hold of top spot and holds a 10-6 lead over Sinner in the head-to-head series.

Reuters

ON COURSE: Carlos Alcaraz

Alcaraz broke Vacherot three times to wrap up victory in 84 minutes and is bidding for his third title of the season.

Sinner eased his way into the Monte Carlo final for the first time with a clinical 6-1, 6-4 semifinal win over Alexander Zverev. The 24-year-old Italian becomes the first player to reach all three finals of the season's first three Masters 1000 events since Novak Djokovic in 2015. "I'm very happy," said Sinner. "We came here trying to give myself some feedback (on clay) and now finding myself in the final means a lot to me." AFP

McIlroy's masterpiece remains the buzz

Rory McIlroy's astonishing finish to grab a Masters record six-stroke lead after 36 holes remained the talk of Augusta National as Saturday's third round began.

The 36-year-old from Northern Ireland birdied six of the last seven holes, including the final four, to seize command on Friday as rivals struggled to find words worthy of the spectacular feat. "Rory played great, made the most of pretty much everything he could out there and that's what it takes to be beating the field by six," world number three Cameron Young said after playing alongside McIlroy.

Defending champion McIlroy fired a seven-under par 65 to stand on 12-under 132 halfway into the year's

AUGUSTA MASTERS

first major tournament, where he hopes to match Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus and Nick Faldo as the only back-to-back winners of the green jacket. "Rory may never lose this thing again," 1992 Masters winner Fred Couples said on Thursday after McIlroy shared the lead on 67.

Second-ranked McIlroy solved Amen Corner's formidable par-three 12th and par-five 13th holes for birdies, then closed with a 29-yard chip in at 17 and a six-foot putt at 18 for epic Masters history. Americans Patrick Reed and Sam Burns shared second on six-under 138 entering the third round with Irishman Shane Lowry and England's Justin Rose and Tommy Fleetwood seven adrift on 139. "I have to go out there with the same free, trusting mindset I have the first two days," McIlroy said. AFP

B'lore Vanguards enjoy all-win outing

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore Vanguards put up a dominant show on Saturday, winning both their Upper Pool Super League matches at the State Women's Basketball Championship in Bengaluru. Vanguards outplayed Vivek's SC 54-39. Later, they registered a 63-57 victory over Vimanapura SC.

Results: Rajmahal BC 61 (Aadhya 27, Shreya 16) bt Appaiah BC 45 (Hiranmayi 10) HT 20-28; Beagles BC 57 (Sanjana 22, Swathi 12) bt Young Orions SC 52 (Sarayu 14, Bindu 12) HT 28-23; Bangalore Vanguards 54 (Suhaavi 14, Charvya 11) bt Vivek's SC 39 (Jeyashree 12) HT 29-21; Mounts Club 49 (Pallavi 14) bt Mysore Dist 'A' 48 (Sanika 19) HT 16-23; DYES Vidyanagar 69 (Nireeksha 15, Deepika 14) bt Vimanapura SC 53 (Shreya 17, Samyukta 14) HT 35-23; Orions 60 (Bindu 13) bt Appaiah 23 (Shruthi 9) HT 36-12; Beagles 67 (Aadhya 22, Chandana 20) bt Rajmahal 37 (Sejal 16) HT 46-18; DYES 62 (Ishitha 20, Deepika 17) bt Vivek's 42 (Jeyashree 19) HT 32-18; Vanguards 63 (Priyanka 19, Prashitha 17) bt Vimanapura 57 (Shwetha 22, Samyukta 12) HT 31-20.

BLUE STAR HC PREVAIL

Blue Star Hockey Club registered a 4-2 win over Coorg Direwolves in the KSHA 'A' Division hockey league championship in Bengaluru on Saturday. Sundar Raj, Shaan, Jeevith and Sridhar scored a goal apiece, while Rohan and Belliappa found the target for Coorg.

Results: Bellary DHA 4 (Lakshman Sri 8, 19, 49, Manikanta 18) bt Flying HC 1; Blue Star HC 4 (Sundar Raj 13, Shaan 17, Jeevith 19, Sridhar 47) bt Coorg Direwolves 2

ROUND-UP

(Rohan 41, Belliappa 44). **Today's matches:** Bellary vs Coorg (1.15 pm); Blue Star vs Flying (3 pm).

INDIA'S CHALLENGE ENDS

India's challenge ended in the quarterfinals of the Asian Heyball Open in Shah Alam, Malaysia, on Saturday. While Shivam Arora went down 2-7 to Mongolia's Lagnaidorj Delgerdalai, Keerthana Pandian and Amee Kamani lost to France's Marion Jude (4-3 on time) and Waratthanun Sukritthanes of Thailand (6-1) in the women's section.

Results (Indians unless mentioned): Men: Quarters: Lagnaidorj Delgerdalai (Mgl) bt Shivam Arora 7-2; Pre-quarters: Shivam bt Kyle Akaloo (RSA) 7-6; Delgerdalai bt Sundeep Gulati 7-4. **Women: Quarters:** Waratthanun Sukritthanes (Thai) bt Amee Kamani 6-1; Marion Jude (Fra) bt Keerthana Pandian 4-3 (on time); **Pre-quarters:** Amee bt Vidya Pillai 5-3 (on time); Keerthana bt Nicola Rossouw (RSA) 5-4 (on time).

TANISHKA, AARNAV TO LEAD KARNATAKA'S CAMPAIGN

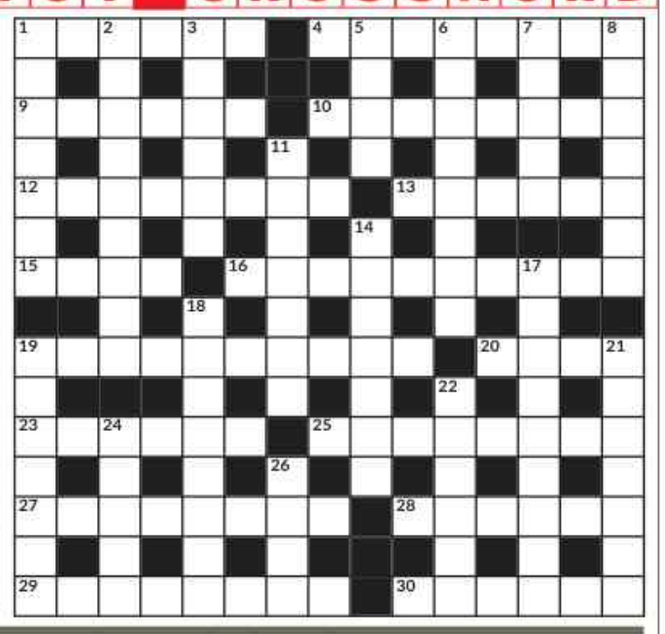
Rising stars Tanishka Kalabhairav and Aarnav N will lead Karnataka's challenge in the 87th Inter-State Junior and Youth National Championships to be held from April 15-23 in Dehradun.

The squad: Girls: U-17: Tanishka Kalabhairav, Himanshi Chowdhary, Hiya Singh, Shivani Mahendran. U-19: Tanishka, Himanshi Chowdhary, Raashi Rao, Hiya. **Manager-cum-coach:** Ashwini Padukone. **Boys: U-17:** Atharva Nawarange, Aarnav, Gaurav Gowda, Shubham Trivedi. U-19: Abhinav Murthy, Varun Kashyap, Aarnav N, BR Gaurav. **Manager-cum-coach:** Praveen Joshi.

THE TOI CROSSWORD

CROSSWORD No. TCC#0267

The TOI Crossword contest is on a short break, but the crossword itself will continue to be featured in The Sunday Times of India, so that you can continue to relish the challenge every week. **Stay tuned!**



The Times of India CROSSWORD EVERY SUNDAY

CRYPTIC CLUES

Across
1 Two lads, one suffering (6)
4 A machine to tune with skill (8)
9 Sound move; plain to a Russian (6)
10 Despair a worry? Not here, surely (8)
12 Slow draw? (8)
13 Pretend to have influence (6)
15 The main type of eagle (4)
16 Results are usually laughable when this missile is launched (7,3)
19 Declined to keep awake? (7,3)
20 Low joint where a cap is worn (4)
23 Eastern country producing tea or rubber for instance (6)
25 Break his model into pieces (8)
27 Its aim is to produce winners of course (4,4)
28 Ladies' man holding ancient city office (6)
29 Deciding to make no further moves? (8)
30 Domestic service (3,3)

Down
1 Not having been given a good hiding? (7)
2 Notable increase in volume (9)
3 Pledged to raise money (2,4)
5 Country artist with an outstanding level of intelligence (4)
6 Housewarming arranged for Alice (4,4)
7 Blazing with a loud anger (5)
8 Where he is involved in a diverting treat? (7)
11 Reasons for sediment (7)
14 Strengthen dispute in Japanese currency (7)
17 Destitute writer on an African river steamer (9)
18 Files put in the wrong order with malicious intent (8)
19 Puts on something saucy? (7)
21 Escape of gas (7)
22 Content of a book (6)
24 Tease the non-male member of the family (5)
26 Smile at the end of a Wagnerian opera (4)

QUICK CLUES

Across
1 Change for the better (6) 4 US federal legislature (8)
9 Destructive swarming insect (6) 10 Wrong-headed (8)
12 Intermittently (3,3,2) 13 Prestigious characteristic (6)
15 Adroitness in handling people (4) 16 Suffer financial setback (5,1,4) 19 Lose an opportunity (4,3,3)
20 Tolerate (4) 23 Secret (6) 25 Impartial (8)
27 Forcibly expressive (8) 28 Very small (6)
29 Hot and bothered (8) 30 A way out (6)

Down
1 Exclude as possibility (4,3) 2 Recognise the truth (4,5)
3 Insurrection (6) 5 Left remaining (4) 6 Inadvertent revelation (8) 7 Soil (5) 8 Made by exploited labour (7)
11 A very long time (3,4) 14 Defendant (7)
17 A welcome for all visitors (4,5) 18 US Strategic Defence Initiative (4,4) 19 Shakespearean regicide (7)
21 Compensation (7) 22 Audacious (6) 24 Venomous snake (5) 26 Monetary penalty (4)

SOLUTIONS TO LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

CRYPTIC

P	A	S	T	I	M	E	■	H	A	T	C	H	E	T
E	■	T	■	L	■	N	■	E	■	I	■	E	■	E
S	H	E	L	L	E	D	■	L	Y	R	I	C	A	L
E	■	R	■	A	■	E	■	D	■	E	■	T	■	L
T	E	N	E	T	■	D	E	H	Y	D	R	A	T	E
A	■	U	■	E	■	■	■	A	■	■	■	R	■	R
S	A	M	E	A	G	A	I	N	■	C	R	E	W	S
■	■	■	■	S	■	L	■	D	■	O	■	■	■	■
B	A	D	G	E	■	L	A	S	T	M	A	T	C	H
A	■	E	■	■	■	O	■	■	■	E	■	H	■	U
D	E	C	K	H	A	N	D	S	■	R	O	U	E	N
E	■	L	■	Y	■	E	■	A	■	O	■	N	■	D
G	O	A	H	E	A	D	■	B	O	U	N	D	E	R
G	■	R	■	N	■	G	■	L	■	N	■	E	■	E
S	E	E	P	A	G	E	■	E	N	D	U	R	E	D

QUICK

B	E	Q	U	E	S	T	■	H	A	G	G	A	R	D
U	■	U	■	N	■	R	■	I	■	E	■	F	■	E
L	E	I	S	U	R	E	■	M	I	N	D	F	U	L
W	■	B	■	M	■	A	■	A	■	U	■	R	■	A
A	M	B	L	E	■	T	A	L	L	S	T	O	R	Y
R	■	L	■	R	■	■	■	A	■	■	■	N	■	E
K	E	E	P	A	T	B	A	Y	■	D	A	T	E	D
■	■	■	■	■	T	■	A	■	E	■	■	■	■	■
P	H	A	S	E	■	C	O	S	T	A	R	I	C	A
R	■	R	■	■	■	K	■	■	■	T	■	N	■	R
O	N	T	H	E	S	P	O	T	■	H	E	A	R	T
S	■	I	■	R	■	E	■	O	■	T	■	D	■	L
A	S	S	U	R	E	D	■	W	A	R	F	A	R	E
I	■	A	■	O	■	A	■	E	■	A	■	Z	■	S
C	E	N	T	R	A	L	■	R	E	P	R	E	S	S

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After talks with Chinese FM, N Korea's Kim says his govt will back China's bid to achieve territorial integrity, a reference to Beijing's claim on Taiwan

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Another TACO in Tehran? It's the midterm math, stupid

SWAMINOMICS

SWAMINATHAN S ANKLESARIA AIYAR

For all the ideological descriptions of the US as an imperialist power, the American public is fundamentally uninterested in long conflicts in distant lands. This first became clear in the Korean War. After three years of war, the US said enough and settled for the status quo in Korea. That lack of political stamina was exhibited later in Vietnam, where it gave up after nine years. In Afghanistan, it gave up after 19 years and 10 months. It is now preparing to exit Iran, although the conflict may continue for some more time as the peace talks will have to overcome several sticking points, such as whether the ceasefire covers Lebanon, whether Iran will allow free passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz and the thorny nuclear issue. But what is clear is that the US is anxious to wind up hostilities quickly.

Long wars are unpopular because they require serious sacrifices that the Americans have no stomach for. They also come with a political cost. The Vietnam War made US President Lyndon Johnson so unpopular that he could not even get his party's nomination when he attempted another term. Donald Trump does not want to become a similar victim. His popularity in opinion polls has slipped, and the public is incensed at rising prices. Petrol is up 35% and diesel 25%. Fertiliser prices have shot up, dismaying US farmers. Petrochemicals, plastics, and fibres are all up. Inflation threatens a debacle for the Republican Party in the mid-term Congressional elections in Nov. The Democrats may win both Houses and cripple his power to do what he likes through executive orders. Many US Presidents become lame ducks in their last two years in office, and Trump desperately wants to avoid that.

That desperation was evident in his threats to unleash Armageddon on Iran, bombing it into the Stone Age. He also moved thousands of marines and airborne troops to the Gulf to threaten an invasion of Kharg Island, the epicentre of Iran's oil exports. Iran, rightly, saw these threats not as those of a conquering superpower but the bluff of a US President desperate to exit a war before its rising costs created a voter revolt.

Trump has gained a reputation for making threats and then chickening out, earning the nickname TACO (Trump Always Chickens Out). That is exactly what he has done in Iran. Initially, he said he aimed to finish off Iran within six weeks. Iran's stamina has taken him by surprise. He should have known better from the examples of Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan.

Long wars are unpopular because they require serious sacrifices that the Americans have no stomach for. They also come with a political cost. The Vietnam War made US President Johnson so unpopular that he could not even get his party's nomination when he attempted another term

Iran's political and military leaders have been assassinated, its military and nuclear facilities have been bombed, and its air defences and missile sites have been smashed. Trump expected the regime to collapse and appealed to Iranian citizens to rise in revolt. Alas, he merely inspired a determination for revenge and fighting on. His threat to bomb all power stations led thousands of civilians to form human chains at these very sites, daring Trump to kill innocents galore.

WILL HE PAY THE PRICE? Even a quick exit from Iran may not necessarily save Donald Trump from the political fallout of inflation in the coming midterms in Nov

Iran's asymmetric warfare has taken the form of using cheap drones, mines, and boats loaded with explosives to hit several ships in the Gulf as well as Qatar's gas fields and refineries in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE. This has paralysed shipping in oil, gas, fertilisers, petrochemicals, helium and other materials.

Iran now claims the right to control passage and levy tolls on ships passing through the Straits of Hormuz, to recoup the costs of the war. Trump once spoke of military escorts to take all ships out safely, but his Navy said this was impractical. He has told the Europeans to use military force to clear Gulf traffic, but they have no stomach for that. That leaves Iran in control.

How will it all end? Nobody can say for certain. But let me stick my neck out and predict that Trump will either accede to Iran's right to levy tolls or let it do so under protest. Iran's current toll is one dollar a barrel. Normal Gulf traffic is 20 million barrels per day, so Iran can hope to get $20 m/day or $7.3 billion/year from oil alone, and more from other cargo. This will fetch it large revenues but raise global prices of oil just a smidgeon. That will suit Trump.

However, not even a quick exit will necessarily save Trump from the political fallout of inflation. Consumer prices rose 0.9% in March, the biggest monthly gain since 2022, according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics. Annual inflation climbed to 3.3%, up sharply from 2.4% in Feb. The current fighting has cut global oil production by 9-10%, petrochemical production by 6-7% and helium production by much more. Returning to pre-war production will take time. So, prices will remain elevated when the US midterm elections come early Nov. That is expected to deal a heavy blow to Trump. ■

Why China chose to stay on the sidelines of the war in West Asia

BY INVITATION

VIJAY GOKHALE

Merely because the People's Republic of China has been peripheral to the conflict in the Gulf should not be taken to mean that it does not have the capacity to get involved. Just as the attack on Iran was a war of choice for Washington, so too has Beijing chosen to remain aloof. The Chinese are a deliberate people. They do not hasten to judge without a detailed study of any situation. Although China has been seemingly passive aside from its clear condemnation of the US-Israeli attack and the assassination of Iran's supreme leader, a behaviour that some in the West might conflate with a lack of capacity to influence events, what China is doing is reflecting on the implications of the war.

The Chinese leadership might be amused by the international isolation in which Washington finds itself, with neither allies nor partners coming to America's assistance after having suffered a whole year of insult and indignity at their hands, but other lessons from this war are not as sanguine. In the 1991 Gulf War, the impressive display of American technology liberated China from the Maoist idea of 'people's war' and convinced it to rapidly modernise its military. Today, the PLA is the most modern and powerful military after the US. But the Iran conflict has, ironically, demonstrated that even with a technologically superior military, war is neither quick nor decisive when the smaller adversary is determined to resist by deploying asymmetric deterrence. Taking territory requires boots on the ground, and China hasn't fought a real war since 1979. Why is this learning important for the Chinese? Because they have declared that they will reunify with Taiwan by any and all means before 2049. On paper, Taiwan is the weaker party but, as Iran demonstrates, a disciplined leadership that continues to function despite decapitation strikes and technological deficiencies can hold a powerful adversary at bay.

The Iran war also holds crucial lessons for China in what might be an eventual Sino-US conflict over Taiwan. Here too, what is at stake is a critical waterway (Taiwan Strait), through which nearly 20% of global maritime trade passes. China has the potential to disrupt, if not to block it— a move that is likely to meet with strong opposition from the US. Iran's success or failure in using its leverage over the crucial strait of Hormuz to forge peace and a new order in the Gulf will hold valuable lessons for the Chinese. American strategy, tactics, and the performance of weapons platforms, as well as the use of AI for precision targeting, are, therefore, likely to be subjects of intense scrutiny by the PLA. At the same time, the Chinese are also likely to take away other lessons — targeting American bases in third countries in case of war, as well as the hardening of their own infrastructure against potential US attack. Since the fourth plenum of the central committee in 2025, President Xi Jinping has called for the securitisation of critical supply chains in order to make them 'risk-free'. This trend will inevitably strengthen, as will another. Iran's theocratic leadership has shown how an ideologically cohesive organisation can operate despite murderous assaults by the adversary. The takeaway for China's leader is to double down on internal hardening within the party-state through greater ideological cohesion and by doubling their guard against the penetration of foreign ideologies that might weaken the Communist Party. Reports that the Americans funnelled weapons into Iran in early 2026 in the hope that it might spark an armed insurrection will enhance Chinese paranoia with significant domestic implications.

SHADOW PLAY: China is content with allowing Pakistan to play mediator in the US-Iran talks, secure that its proxy will consult it

Coming back to the question of why China sat on the sidelines for most of this conflict, in this instance, it was content with allowing Pakistan to run the mediation in the knowledge that its proxy would consult with and take into consideration Chinese interests in any potential peace settlement. In the meantime, China can continue to enable Iran to facilitate oil transactions through grey shipping and banking channels, as well as to provide crucial dual-use items, while also doing business with the Gulf states. According to reports, in early March, China supplied sodium perchlorate, a precursor for missiles, to Iran, and it continues to be the largest buyer of Iranian oil. Its assistance also takes other forms — social media and so-called non-governmental companies (MizarVision, for example) that allow it to provide Iran with images and information detailing the location of US forces and movements with plausible deniability. And there is every likelihood that China's BeiDou system (an alternative to the US GPS) is being used by the Iranian military for targeting its adversaries. It suits China to operate from the shadows.

Perhaps the most consequential outcome for China is that America has demonstrated the limits of its power in this war

The Chinese stand to benefit from the ceasefire irrespective of the form or shape that the peace might take. First, Iran would likely become more dependent on China in any circumstances, which would also give it first rights to profitably rebuild infrastructure in exchange for Iranian crude oil. Second, it would bind Iran even closer in a strategic sense to China in a critical geography (proximity of two critical choke-points — Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb), possibly with future basing facilities. At the very least, it would enhance China's strategic footprint in the northern Indian Ocean. Third, it would solidify the China-led effort to unite the Eurasian landmass as a bloc. China steered Iran's entry into the SCO (2023) and BRICS (2024) with this long-term strategic goal in mind. Binding Iran and Russia still closer to China (together with Pakistan) reduces the possibility of American subversion from its western areas (which are the sensitive border regions of Xinjiang and Tibet). The US-led war might, ironically, serve China's national security goals in more than one way.

But, perhaps, the most consequential outcome for China is that the US has demonstrated the limits of its power in this war. They no longer have the monopoly on technology, equipment, or information. China can provide alternative technology, advanced weapons, satellite-based navigation systems, AI-enabled platforms, banking channels, shipping lines, and dual-use items. It marks the end of Western hegemony. Therein, perhaps, lies the most important benefit for China from this war. Whether they will use the opportunity wisely or fall to hubris is another matter. ■

Gokhale is former foreign secretary and ambassador to China

Want to protect women in Iran? Then don't kill them in airstrikes

FOR THE RECORD

James McDougall is skeptical of historians who try to predict the future. Yet, he argues, their role remains crucial in helping us move beyond binaries and challenge myths. The Oxford professor and author of 'Worlds of Islam: A Global History' speaks to ***Shruti Sonal*** *about why we need to move past reductive 'Orientalist' views of the Muslim world*

■ Your book is an attempt to move away from Orientalist views that focus on a single, monolithic Muslim world, distinct from an equally monolithic Euro-American West. What drove you to write it?

The funny thing is that historians moved away from that kind of Orientalist account 30-40 years ago, but it still dominates public perceptions. I particularly wanted to look at what being Muslim means in the modern world and challenge the perception that Muslims have been anti-modernity in a sense. If we think the modern world is defined by a certain set of institutionally organised systems, defined by technology, individual rights, autonomy, and liberal democracy, then people point out that Islam isn't modern. This argument takes a particular ideological reading of what it means to be modern, bases it on an ideal understanding of European and American history in the 19th and 20th centuries, and then measures the rest of the world by that standard. That's an imperial narrative, and it continues to be used as justification for European and American military power exercised over the Global South today.

■ In particular, you've addressed how Iran is still imagined in Europe and the US as the model of a 'monolithic, civilisational otherness', but that's far from the truth. What's your take?

People who support the war, including the right-wing Iranian diaspora in America, are mobilising a certain narrative of Iranian civilisation as a separate pre-Islamic thing onto which Islam has been somehow imposed. They are propagating a myth: a civilisational narrative that was propagated by the Pahlavi monarchy from the 1920s onwards of a certain kind of Iranian national identity. In the book, I have looked at the very early incorporation of Iran into a Muslim-majority world and the rapidity with which people within Iran itself rewrote their pre-Islamic history in the early years after the Muslim conquests to incorporate an Islamic vision into their own understandings of themselves. People take these different narratives and cultural resources on Islam and combine them in creative ways to make sense of the world they live in at different moments. And those things change over time.

■ After 9/11, during the Iraq War, and during the ongoing war with Iran, a key rhetoric of Western politicians has been liberating local women from conservative Islamic clergy. Your thoughts?

These narratives are historically very selective and politically often very opportunistic. We saw it in 2002 in Afghanistan, then in 2003 in Iraq, and more recently in Iran, and in justifications of Israel's genocide in Gaza. If you're trying to act in favour of Iranian women's rights, the best way to do so is probably not to kill large numbers of Iranian women in airstrikes. But it's astonishing how much traction those narratives have, particularly in Europe and the US.

One of the ways that the older Orientalist narrative often tries to exceptionalise Islam or Muslim societies is by suggesting that they're somehow uniquely bad at gender relations or uniquely repressive to women, which is simply not true. Islam is, like most religious systems, a patriarchal religious system that privileges maleness and a male-dominated hierarchy. But it's arguably considerably less patriarchal than Catholic Christianity, in which women are systematically denied any kind of leadership role. In contrast, women have had leadership roles in Muslim religious and political systems at different moments in history, including the famous Razia Sultan and a series of queens who ruled in Southeast Asia in the early modern period.

■ You've spoken about how India is a good example of how the clash of civilisation narrative didn't always hold true. What set it apart?

The argument that Muslims are inherently foreign to India is too simplistic. Islam has been adopted by large numbers of people in North India over a very long period of time, much more slowly than elsewhere. It took several generations in places like Punjab for local communities to identify themselves as Muslim. It was not a period of conquest and conversion, but incorporation and adaptation. There's also the fact that in India, Muslim rulers, especially from the beginning of the Mughal period onwards, were ruling over a very large territory, most of whose subjects weren't Muslim and didn't want to become Muslim. There was very little push to convert large numbers of Indians to Islam, unlike in the Middle East. The way Islam was understood by the Mughal court itself and by the scholars around the sultans, in particular under Akbar's reign, was much more adaptable because the majority population was never going to be Muslim. There was a demographic difference compared to the Middle East or North Africa, where Muslims were the dominant sector.

■ Will the Iran crisis widen the Shia-Sunni gap or help in bridging it?

The split between Sunni and Shia is one of those things that's often assumed to be a binary divide. That's too simplistic. Over the course of much of Islamic history, there has been a lot of crossover between Sunnis and Shias. Sectarian distinctions aren't always as distinct as people like to pretend they are, especially the Islamists on both sides. There's a lot of sympathy right now in responses to the attack on Iran. It's not just Shia Muslims who are outraged and offended at what Israel and America are doing to Iran. In the Gulf, people are quite divided because they're also being attacked by Iran, but they know they're being attacked because the Americans attacked Iran. The way the Sunni-Shia division has been played up by the Gulf monarchies, often to the detriment of their own Shia population, is going to be increasingly difficult to maintain in the future. In Europe and the US, on the other hand, the Sunni-Shia difference is much less politically salient than people might assume it is. Does the fact that Zohran Mamdani is a Shia actually matter? I don't think so. The fact that he's Muslim matters. Globally, I think people look at Sunni Muslim Palestinians in Gaza and Shia Muslim Iranians in Iran as being the targets of imperial violence. It might be a unifying factor in some respects.

India, US and the limits of the Iran isolation strategy

BY INVITATION

SANDEEP BHARDWAJ

India's silence on the Iran war has sparked an intense debate between those who accuse New Delhi of shirking its moral obligations and those who argue that condemning US-Israeli aggression would be an empty gesture. Missing from this debate is a more important question: What role did India play in the long-term isolation of Iran?

Under pressure from Washington, New Delhi has gradually disentangled itself from Tehran over the past decade and a half, especially in the last six years. Today, it has practically no economic or strategic interests left in the Persian state. This shift contributed to Iran's growing international isolation, forming part of the broader conditions that set the stage for the current conflict.

Isolating its adversaries has always been one of Washington's preferred strategies. The US uses economic sanctions not only to punish its rivals but also to sequester them from the rest of the world. Historically, India opposed this strategy. It maintained the policy of abiding by only UN sanctions, and not those imposed unilaterally by the US, as articulated by former foreign minister Sushma Swaraj.

Isolation makes states vulnerable and provokes them into risky, desperate actions. Even after the 1962 Sino-Indian War, New Delhi continued to support Beijing's entry into the United Nations because it believed that keeping China cut off from the world would make it more bellicose.

This belief shaped India's broader approach. As the largest country outside rival blocs, it has often acted as a safety valve, maintaining ties with isolated states, easing polarisation, and preventing them from drifting entirely into the orbit of America's principal adversaries, once the USSR and now China. Most recently, India's insistence on continuing its ties with Russia was important in ensuring that Moscow wasn't shut out of the world and wholly dependent on Beijing.

India constructed its friendship with Iran in the 1990s, at a time when the US was encircling the West Asian state with new sanctions. In the early 2000s, as Washington ratcheted up the sanctions pressure on Tehran and dubbed it part of the 'Axis of Evil', New Delhi moved to deepen its relationship. Under Prime Minister A B Vajpayee, India committed to a cluster of interlocking projects to bring the two countries closer, including development of Chabahar port, Zahedan rail line, Farzad-B gas field, and the India-Pakistan-Iran pipeline. Iran also became one of its biggest petroleum suppliers.

Isolating its adversaries has always been a preferred US tactic. But historically, India opposed this strategy. Most recently, it ensured that Moscow wasn't shut out of the world

MIND THE GAP: Under US pressure, India has gradually distanced itself from Iran. But it should go back to its traditional role as a bridge between rival blocs

The tightrope walk began after New Delhi forged a strategic partnership with Washington in the mid-2000s. It made concessions to placate the US, such as voting against Iran in the International Atomic Energy Agency and shelving the proposed India-Pakistan-Iran pipeline. However, it refused to accede to American sanctions or provide diplomatic support to Washington. During a tense moment in 2008, when the US and Israel threatened to attack Iran, India issued a pre-emptive statement that such a military strike would be "unacceptable international behaviour" that would destabilise the entire region.

American officials believed that Indian defiance stemmed from the allure of cheap oil or adherence to strategic autonomy. However, the Indian policy of resisting what it called "counterproductive" sanctions also served the larger, geostrategic goal of maintaining stability in the region.

In 2012, US pressure finally succeeded in forcing India to reduce its crude oil imports from Iran after much bickering, though it remained one of the largest purchasers of Iranian oil. In 2019, when President Trump launched the "maximum pressure" campaign after withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal, India stopped imports of crude oil from Iran to preserve its strategic relationship with the US. American pressure also unravelled its major investments. The Chabahar port, the last surviving major project conceived in the Vajpayee era, is now teetering under the threat of US sanctions, though New Delhi is in talks with Washington for a waiver to safeguard its interests. Of course, India was not the only nation to sever ties with Iran under American pressure, but it was one of the most significant ones. China, willing to withstand US coercion, remained Iran's only major economic partner.

Iran's isolation in the last six years has predictably destabilised the entire region. The US and Israel correctly assumed that no one would object to the current war except China and Russia because no one had economic stakes in Iran. The same isolation also led Tehran to take desperate measures such as attacking its neighbours and closing the Strait of Hormuz.

If India wishes to play a role in stabilising West Asia in the future, its path lies not just in making principled statements or offering to mediate, but in a long-term strategy of deliberate economic integration with all major actors in the region. ■

Bhardwaj is a research fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore

WORD DROP

BOREOUT

We've all heard about or experienced 'burnout' at work, resulting from being overburdened with tasks and long working hours. However, the grass might not be greener on the other side. Turns out, a contrasting scenario that occurs when work becomes painfully dull or slow is not exactly ideal either, leading to what

Image: AI

the internet is now calling 'boreout'. It's not about being overworked but about being underused, under-challenged, and stuck doing tasks that feel meaningless. On the surface, it might look easy, but in reality, it's draining, leading employees to stretch out simple tasks or disengage completely. The result? Low motivation, fatigue, creeping frustration, and even anxiety or depression. Addressing it requires structural as well as personal changes, including job redesign, skill development, clearer communication, and opportunities for meaningful contribution.

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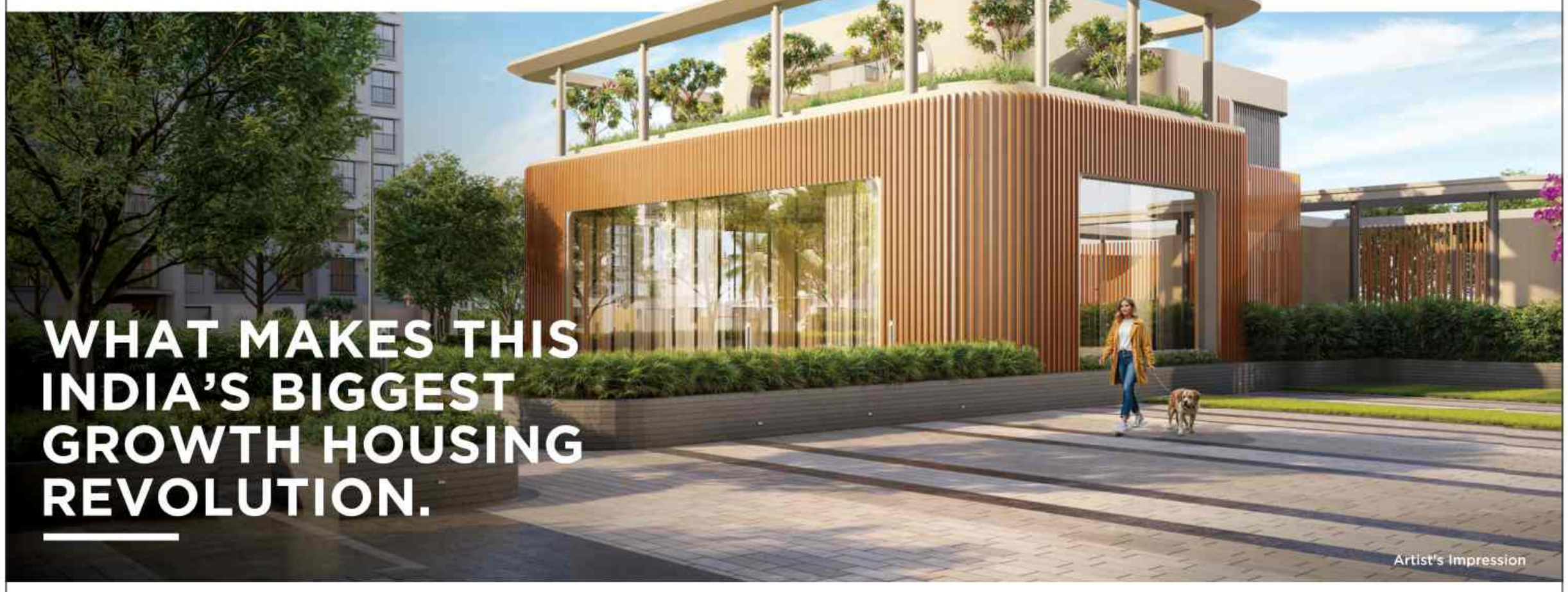

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2 BHK RISE HOMES	₹7,14,177	₹7,29,624	₹72,240		₹13,52,226

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Bengaluru's best of food & nightlife, crowned

From standout kitchens to buzzing bars, the Times Food and Nightlife Awards 2026, held at Sheraton Grand Bengaluru Whitefield Hotel & Convention Center, celebrated the city's most exciting dining and party destinations. It is back to the same stage on the night of 10th, 11th, and 12th, today

TIMES FOOD & NIGHTLIFE AWARDS BENGALURU 2026

If your reality need to make a formal go to someone's house and sit with him... Why people who good are their best good are their best

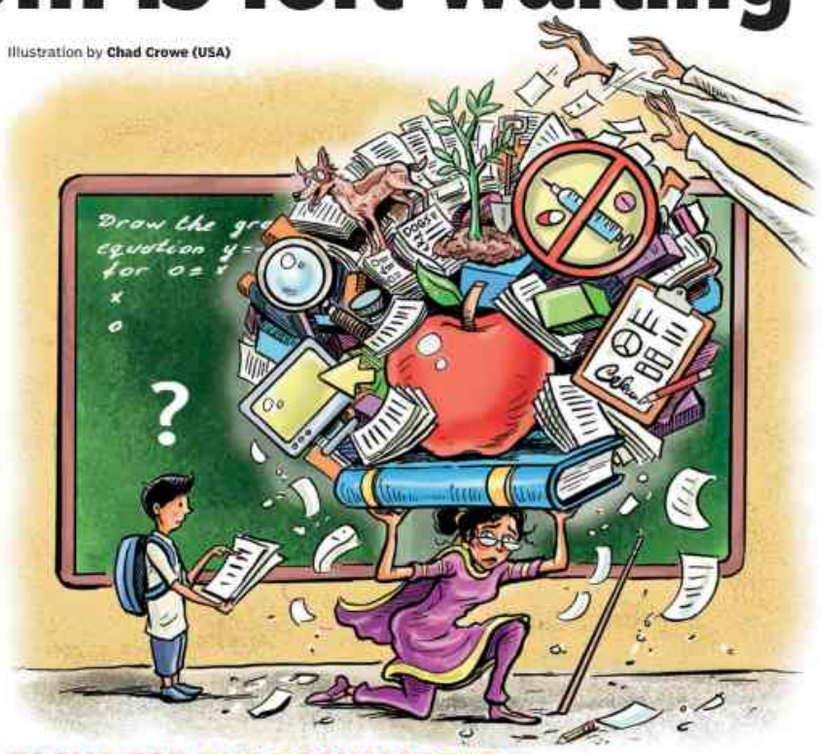
— Chetan Bhagat

Teachers are on duty, but classroom is left waiting

From counting strays and drug addicts to SIR and Census work, govt school educators have ever-longer to-do lists

Himanshi.Dhawan@timesofindia.com

Illustration by **Chad Crowe (USA)**



TASKS FOR THE TASKMASTER

- Distribute T-shirts, plant saplings and upload pictures in Assam
- In Maharashtra, teachers asked to conduct military recruitment tests at night
- Supervise midday meals, support deworming and vaccination programmes
- Computer teachers in Punjab directed to make govt health insurance cards
- Urban private teachers forced to give constant WhatsApp updates on child's progress

They are counting stray dogs in Gujarat, drug addicts in Punjab and tasting mid-day meals in Andhra Pradesh. In Feb, school teachers were requisitioned as booth level officers for the special intensive revision (SIR) survey, and now as enumerators for the Census, making them omnipresent everywhere except where they belong: the classroom.

Around 30 lakh enumerators, most of them govt school teachers, have been roped in for door-to-door enumeration beginning April 16. In states like Karnataka, this has triggered pushback, with teachers already deployed on board exam duty. But under Census rules, anyone assigned to assist who refuses or fails to perform their duties can face imprisonment of up to three years.

For decades, school teachers have been relied on for some jobs like election and Census duty, but a combination of new technology and old vacancies has caused fresh chaos. In the absence of trained govt staff, state govts have found one solution, no matter what the problem — school teachers across the country — to be routinely engaged in welfare scheme verification, data collection, health campaigns, midday meal monitoring, and other administrative assignments.

ONE-STOP FIX

They are often the first choice for govt departments because educationists represent a large cohort that is educated, available in large numbers, present in almost every village and town and usually enjoy a certain amount of credibility within communities.

Last Oct, teachers in Ferozepur district of Punjab were asked to prepare ground reports to identify farmers who were burning stubble amid rising pollution in the north, and court orders to curb it. In Feb, the state's computer teachers were tasked with generating health insurance cards issued by the govt. Computer Teacher's Union state president Gurvinder Singh says, "We protested against the order. If we work on the health card scheme, who will teach in class?" They succeeded in stalling the move in cities like Ludhiana but days later, a new circular asked teachers to volunteer for a survey on drug abuse prevalence. "When no one volunteers, they will make it mandatory for us to do the work. Who will risk their life and limb to go door-to-door to ask if their family members are drug addicts?" says Singh.

Earlier this year, when the Supreme Court sought data on stray dogs, Gujarat teachers were deployed on the streets to count them. Those in Assam have been enrolled for various govt schemes, including distributing T-shirts under the Jaldoot programme, planting saplings and uploading their pictures under the 'Ek Ped Maa ke Naam' campaign. In Maharashtra, the teacher's union in Chhatrapati Shambhajinagar protested when they were asked to report at 11pm to test candidates for military recruitment. Union district president Vijay Salkar says, "The administration expects us to work through the night to assess candidates in physical tests. How can we attend school the next day?"

TEACHING, INTERRUPTED

While some duties fall under public service, the growing burden has raised serious concerns about its effect on education. Educationist and former NCERT director Prof Krishna Kumar says many schools have moved away from regular teaching towards event management. "The realities of today's teachers are oppressive. Nobody expects teachers to teach, nor is it recognised even when it does happen," he says.

A 2018 study by the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration found that teachers spent only 19% of their time teaching. And of the 220 days mandated by the Right to Education Act, just 42 days were spent on teaching in 2015-16. Experts say the situation has worsened despite multiple court orders underlining the importance of classroom teaching, with vacancies across departments unfilled for years now.

> In March, all teachers were asked to conduct a survey on drug abuse prevalence in the state. We protested against it. Who will risk their life and limb to go door-to-door asking people if their family members are drug addicts?
>
> **Gurvinder Singh,** TEACHER'S UNION, PUNJAB

The nature of the work has expanded, too. Under pressure from education boards and govts, teachers must not only carry out administrative work but also document it and upload photo proof. Assessments have changed as well. A Maharashtra teacher explains, "All teachers must download the Nipun app that assesses foundational literacy and numeracy. They are expected to record the audio of each child for each subject. If I am teaching six new Marathi sentences in a primary class, I have to record each child speaking those sentences aloud or solving the maths problem and submit it."

Health and nutrition campaigns have added another layer of responsibility. In many states, teachers are expected to support vaccination, deworming and hygiene drives, maintain health records, and oversee midday meals. Last month, Andhra Pradesh's education minister directed all teachers to supervise meals and taste them before they are served. Although student nutrition is important, the administrative side of these schemes often falls on teachers rather than dedicated support staff. This turns teachers into record keepers and supervisors instead of educators.

THE 24/7 SHIFT

The problem is not limited to rural or govt schools. In urban areas, private school teachers are also required to manage digital portals, upload records, maintain registers, and respond to multiple WhatsApp groups through the day. Pradeep Sharma, CEO of TeacherFirst, a job site for teachers, says interaction with parents has become a 24-hour exercise. "Parents want constant updates. For some, it is just satisfying their ego to discuss issues like the child not eating his tiffin or not paying attention in class. These issues were earlier dealt through circulars or diary notes. Now, they stretch into WhatsApp messages that go back and forth through the day," he says.

Given that schools are also keen on maintaining a strong digital presence now, it means organising activities and documenting them online. Rohit Arora, teacher at a Noida school and founder of EdinIndia, an education policy and recruitment platform for teachers, says, "Parents and students are customers who must be kept satisfied with constant updates. At the same time, lesson planning, maintaining class workflows, and strict academic timelines further intensify their workload."

AT WHAT COST

The fallout is showing in teacher burnout, rising stress and classrooms losing ground while surveys show primary school students with worse learning outcomes every year. A 2024 ASER survey of 6.5 lakh children found 76% of Class 3 students, 55% of Class 5 students and 32% of Class 8 students cannot read at a Class 2 level, while over 66% of Class 3 and Class 5 students struggle with simple maths. Perhaps it's time those assigning the homework let teachers return to classwork.

Kitsch to coveted, the new rush for Ravi Varma prints

Once brushed off as mass decor, the 19th-century artist's oleographs now command high prices, even as collectors refuse to part with them

Sneha.Bhura@timesofindia.com

Jatin Kumar

NEW GUARD: Both Prem Kandwal and Amar Reddy (left) have built extensive Ravi Varma print collections in less than five years

The sale of Raja Ravi Varma's original oil painting 'Yashoda and Krishna', which stormed past Rs 167 crore earlier this month to become the most expensive Indian artwork, has had ripple effects beyond the auction room. Among collectors of his oleographs — specialised lithographic prints, or chromolithographs, textured to resemble oil paintings — who have spent decades chasing works once dismissed as mass-produced decor, there is now a sense of renewed urgency. And rising value.

In 'Aja Vilapam' (King Aja's Lament), the 19th-century artist captures Aja in a moment of devastating grief, seated beside the lifeless body of Queen Indumati as a garland slips from his hand. Drawn from 'Raghuvamsha', Kalidasa's epic poem, the work distils a tragic episode of love and loss. An original oil of 'Aja Vilapam' today would likely command upwards of Rs 100 crore.

But in a climate-controlled studio in Gurugram, collector Prem Kandwal pulls out a more accessible version — an original oleograph of the same work — from a laminated album.

Varma's prints were first produced at the Ravi Varma Fine Art Lithographic Press, established in 1894 in Girgaum, Bombay, before it later shifted to other parts of Maharashtra following the plague years. Kandwal's 10 x 14 inch print of King Aja's Lament dating back to the Malavli press near Lonavala, set up around 1899 "is the rarest of the rare," he says. "Five years ago, this was Rs 10,000-15,000. Today, it's Rs 70,000. But I won't sell it even for Rs 10 lakh... I have prints not available in major museum collections, prints which academics have written about without seeing."

Kandwal's journey into collecting began during the pandemic while replacing the glass of a damaged Ahalya Indravalokan print. "The framer was shocked I had it. When he said this is not easily seen, I understood its value," he recalls. A former corporate executive, Kandwal has since expanded a family inheritance into what he describes as "one of the largest private collections in Asia" including Ravi Varma prints, framed in museum-quality glass, postcards and even original copper plates from the Ravi Varma Press.

These prints are authenticated by closely examining the registration number, caption and press name printed on the right-hand side, along with period-specific fonts, natural ageing and thickness of the paper and distributor stamps on the reverse.

On April 10, Kandwal curated an exhibition at Bikaner House in Delhi, showcasing 21 rare oleographs from his private collection that capture Ravi Varma's blend of Puranic themes and European academic realism. "Mark my words, these oleographs will sell like paintings after a few years," he says.

If collectors like Kandwal represent a newer wave of interest, veterans like Ganesh V Shivaswamy have watched the shift over decades. "Chromolithographs, at one point in time, were available in plenty. Today, they are becoming rare," says the Bengaluru-based lawyer, who has spent over three decades building a private archive of nearly 40,000 works from the Ravi Varma Press. He began collecting when, at 16, a diagnosis of pituitary cancer and partial vision loss led a doctor to suggest to look at art.

> These oleographs will sell like paintings after a few years. But I won't sell. I have prints which are not available in major museum collections
>
> **Prem Kandwal,** COLLECTOR

In its heyday in the early 20th century, the press was believed to produce up to 800 impressions per hour using German technology. This moved art from royal palaces to everyday homes, temples and shops across India. Prints of Varma's Lakshmi and Saraswati were even used in advertisements and calendars for Vinolia Soap, supplied to first-class cabins on the Titanic. "While paintings and prints are different, a similarity is emerging as both are becoming rare. Today, his chromolithographs are fetching prices his paintings commanded about 15 years ago," says Shivaswamy, who has written a six-volume series on Varma's influence and curated two museums on the artist. Rather than seeing prints as secondary, Shivaswamy views them as foundational to Ravi Varma's legacy. "Because prints circulate widely, the image enters the memory of a large number of people, something a painting alone cannot achieve," he says.

Designed for affordability, these prints once hung in kitchens, temples and homes, exposed to humidity, incense smoke, insects and constant handling. Many faded, tore, stuck to glass or were lost when old homes were demolished, or sold off to scrap dealers and antique traders. But collectors began showing serious interest in Ravi Varma oleographs in the early 2000s, as their cultural and historical value went from everyday decor to rare artefacts. Dedicated collecting emerged around 2006-2014 amid art market growth and exhibitions. By the 2020s, auction houses and dealers had further driven demand. Today, collectors who once picked these up casually have become custodians of a visual culture long dismissed as kitsch.

When Mumbai-based Amar Reddy came across a 2022 Facebook post about a family in Jalgaon giving away Ravi Varma prints while relocating, he drove 400 km to see them.

"A hall in their house was entirely covered with framed prints. When the frames were taken down, 50-60 years of dust, and even small sparrow nests, came out." He acquired 38 prints from that single visit. Among his prized possessions are prints of 'Lakshmi', 'Shakuntala Janam', 'Maharaja and Maharani of Mysore', 'Gangavataran', 'Mohini' and 'Tilottama'. He paid roughly Rs 2,000 per print then. Today, he says, those same works would command at least Rs 35,000 each. "I've told my children that if something happens to me...hold onto the collection for another 20 years. It could become a gold or diamond mine."

Sometimes, discovery happens by accident. Pradeep Garg from Agra entered the world of art via his work dealing in old arms and ammunition, during which he often encountered such prints in homes across Rajasthan and Gujarat. It was during one such visit to Jodhpur, around 30 years ago, that he first encountered Varma's work. "I had gone looking for antiques, but when I saw these prints, I asked if I could buy them. At that time, people were hardly aware of their value."

He went on to build a collection spanning early 20th-century Ravi Varma prints sourced from homes, havelis and antique dealers. Today, his entire house is filled with them. "There is no real culture of art in Agra," he says. "Most people come for the Taj Mahal and leave in a day." With the Uttar Pradesh government building the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Museum in the city, Garg hopes his collection may one day find a home there for the world to see.

Butter, Batter, Boom: The dosa that's queue-good

Born in a small Karnataka town, the benne dosa has gone from a no-frills breakfast staple to a crowd-puller, but not everyone's convinced

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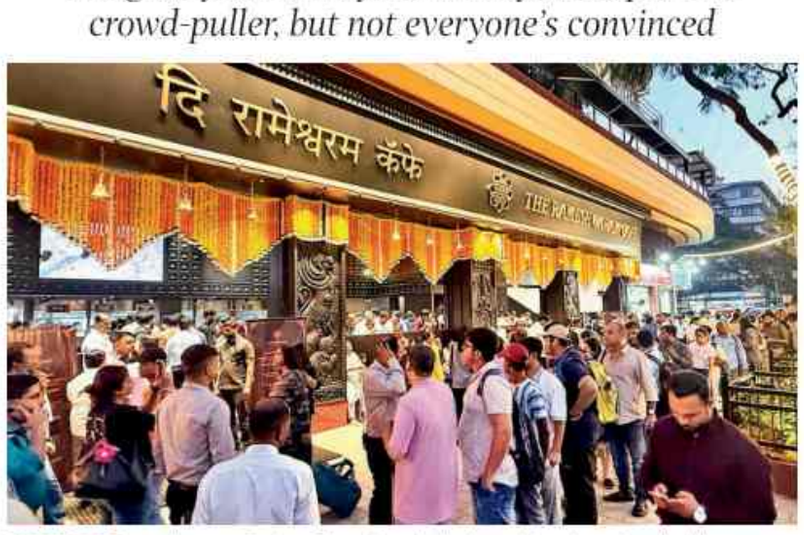


HOT PLATE: Rameshwaram Cafe, a Bengaluru chain famed for ghee-drenched benne dosas, and Mumbai's Benne have both opened in Delhi and have expansion plans

On a busy Pali Hill in Bandra, a man stopped in his tracks to stare at a queue snaking around the block. "Is this for a job?" he asked. When told it wasn't an employment call but a dosa, he persisted: "Is it being given away for free then?"

This anecdote, posted on X, testifies to the growing benne (butter in Kannada) dosa mania. When Bengaluru's Rameshwaram Cafe celebrated its Mumbai launch last month with three days of free, butter-laden benne dosa, crowds swarmed Churchgate from dawn to midnight. People continue to line up even after the offers ran out. Watching what looks like the mother of all queues — not for the latest iPhone, but for "people who have lost their mind" over a centuries-old southern breakfast staple — a social media commentator suggested that if you're going to commit an hour of your life to a footpath, it helps to at least learn to pronounce it right: 'behnay doh-say', as they say it in Karnataka.

Move over matcha and supper clubs. Benne dosa is having its pop culture moment outside its home state, whether on a pavement, a reel, or via a friend who insists it's worth the fuss. The story, however, begins far from Instagram. In 1928, a severe drought forced a woman named Chennamma and her family to migrate to Davanagere from Bidaki village in Karnataka in search of work. She set up a small eatery near a drama theatre, feeding workers and theatre-goers. Her dosa — made with generous amounts of homemade white butter (or benne) — became a local sensation. The recipe grew into a legacy that shaped the Davanagere-style benne dosa that later travelled to the capital, Bengaluru, and evolved into its own city-style version popular across no-frills darshinis (standing, self-service eateries) that define the city's breakfast culture.

Butter Banter

Today, that hyperlocal style has travelled far beyond Karnataka. Across cities, several cafes have turned 'benne' into a buzzword, nudging diners away from the familiar long, crisp Udupi-style dosa towards a smaller, thicker, shinier version. What remains constant is the butter — whether white butter or a mix with ghee — which is now both the dish's signature and its most debated feature.

For Bengaluru-based food vlogger Kripal Amanna, the butter-versus-ghee question has never been rigid. "It depends on preference and availability," he says, pointing out that in Bengaluru itself, benne dosa isn't always treated as a distinct category. The only place where the term truly denotes a specific texture and flavour, he says, remains Davanagere itself. Historically, butter was more common in places like Davanagere because it was easier and cheaper to obtain. Traditional ghee was far more labour-intensive that required churning curd into butter and then cooking it down into ghee using the Bilona (wood-churner) method. What's changed, though, is the narrative around it. "Now it's the storytelling. As the dosa travels north and west, the butter element has become a hook," says Amanna.

Butter, of course, already has cultural resonance in northern and western cuisines, from parathas to pav bhaji. But Amanna is wary of the excess. "At its heart, dosa is a very healthy thing. With so much emphasis on butter or ghee, you wouldn't want your dosa to mimic a paratha. That would be a travesty!"

Even in Bengaluru, the idea of benne dosa is not fixed. Variations range from tweaks in the batter to how the chutney is served or smeared.

Waiting Game

Mumbai's Benne, now also in Delhi, was born out of co-founder Akhil Iyer's homesickness for Bengaluru's benne dosas — quick darshini bites he grew up eating after cricket matches at places like CTR and Chikkanna Tiffin Room. Today, at his own outlets, that community experience has been recreated with digital ordering kiosks, long communal tables and playful touches like order numbers named after neighbourhood characters such as Fighter Ravi or Chickpet Chetan.

On a Wednesday in March, well before dinner hours, an hour-long queue waits outside Benne's Delhi outlet. If you ask for directions to the restaurant, people snigger about the wait in a market area which is otherwise deserted, with news of LPG cylinder shortage and gas-guzzling dosas facing the axe in the midst of the US-Iran war. Inside Benne, however, the communal tables are abuzz. A diner from Dehradun says she couldn't get a table at the Mumbai outlet but managed one in Delhi. At another table, four friends have ordered nearly every dosa on the menu and are debating versions across Bengaluru, Mumbai and Delhi, much like residents compare the liveability of the three cities. One noticeable absence is sambar. "People do ask why there is no sambar, especially in Delhi," says Iyer. "We're doing this because we want to stay true to the tradition of this style of dosa."

The story begins far from the Instagram frenzy. In 1928, a drought pushed a woman named Chennamma to Davanagere, where her butter-laden dosa became a local sensation. The recipe grew into the benne dosa that travelled to Bengaluru and evolved into its own city-style breakfast item

Now Serving: Everywhere

Before this new wave of branding, it was Bengaluru's Rameshwaram Cafe that thrust benne dosa into the spotlight when it catered at Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's wedding festivities two years ago. The brand is now expanding rapidly across temple cities such as Varanasi, Ayodhya, Shirdi and Tirupati, as well as overseas, betting that benne dosa can travel the way the masala dosa once did, even as its dosas draw sharply divided opinions online with some hailing it as 'iconic' and others dismissing it as 'overhyped'.

While many Bengaluru natives have taken the dosa beyond Karnataka, others are adapting it closer to home. In Nagpur, 25-year-old Nikhil Vadwani started a benne dosa outlet after spending two years in Bengaluru. "Many of the kitchen workers making benne dosa are North Indians anyway. Besides, I'm a Sindhi. I know how to run a good business," he says, though convincing customers of the missing sambar took time.

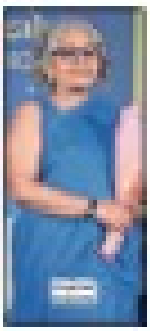
For all its mutations that have turned the benne dosa into a viral phenomenon, not everyone is convinced. Lucknow, for one, isn't easily impressed by a dosa. In a city that takes its slow, layered Awadhi cuisine seriously, the arrival of a pricier, butter-soaked, social media-famous 'benne' dosa has raised more than a few eyebrows.

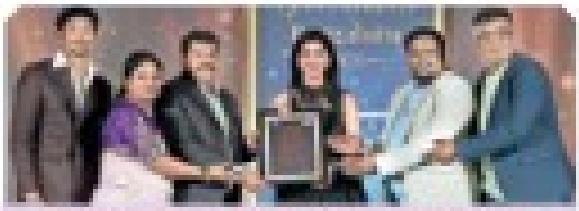
In 2024, Kokkam in Gomti Nagar introduced regional dishes from across southern states, including Karnataka-style benne dosa. The price alone caught Manjari Singh's attention. "Their dosas were around Rs 400 and I was like, what *is* this dosa?" For Singh, and many like her, the confusion hasn't quite cleared. "Some restaurants describe it as thin and crispy," she says. "Others say it's soft and fluffy. That blob of butter is mandatory. I like it, but I don't know what this dosa is really supposed to taste like," she admits. As Mayukh Nair, a software engineer and foodie, puts it: "How can any dosa be one-hour-queue good? Is it that life-changing? I don't think so."

— With inputs by ***Mohua Das***

Bringing together the best of food and nightlife

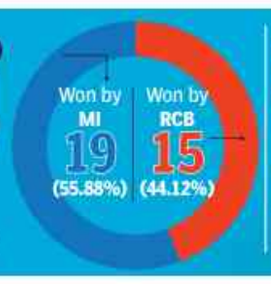
TIMES FOOD AND NIGHTLIFE AWARDS BENGALURU





TODAY'S FACE-OFF
MI vs RCB
TV TIME 7:30 PM
STAR SPORTS / JIOHOTSTAR

PLAYED 34



LAST FIVE MATCHES
MI L L W L W
RCB L W W W W

VENUE: MUMBAI

ODDS
MI 5/10 | RCB 11/10

IPL 2026

"IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT IN A TOURNAMENT LIKE THE IPL, IT'S A MARATHON. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO WIN EVERY GAME. BUT IF THE TEAM KEEPS SHOWING CHARACTER, KEEPS FIGHTING, THAT'S HOW YOU EXCEL."
—Dinesh Karthik | RCB batting coach & mentor

SAMSON KICKSTARTS NEW ERA FOR CSK

Wicketkeeper-Batter Scores His First Century For Franchise As Super Kings Beat Capitals By 23 Runs

LR Shankar

WELCOME RUNS: Sanju Samson celebrates his century on Saturday

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Chennai: The Chennai Super Kings vibe is back. New star recruit Sanju Samson is up and running, the bowling attack suddenly has found its rhythm and the crazy fans have now experienced that winning feeling at home after six back-to-back defeats at the Chepauk.

The 23-run win over Delhi Capitals on Saturday — CSK's first of this season — did have its share of scares, especially when Tristan Stubbs was going great guns towards the end and had got the target down to 32 off the last two overs. But medium-pacer Jamie Overton (4/18) carried on with his superb work for the day to remove Stubbs at the right moment, ensuring CSK got home.

Before that, a 60-run opening stand by KL Rahul and Pathum Nissanka, too threatened to take the game away from CSK. But a collapse fashioned by pacemen Khaleel Ahmed, Gurjapneet Singh, Anshul Kamboj and Overton pegged DC back at 76/4, with Sarfaraz Khan's stunning catch at point to send Axar Patel back also demanding a special mention. The game, however, will be remembered for Samson's first step at becoming Chepauk's 'Chettan' Super King. His 115 not out off 56 balls and the 113-run second-wicket stand with Ayush Mhatre (59 off 36 balls) gave CSK the perfect platform to set a formidable target.

115* Unbeaten knock off 56 balls by Sanju Samson, the first hundred by a CSK wicketkeeper in the IPL. The previous highest was MS Dhoni's 84 not out vs RCB in Bengaluru on April 21, 2019.

Sanju gave himself a little bit of time at the start and chose not to go too hard. He looked to time the ball and wait for opportunities instead of looking for big sixes. His half-century came off 26 balls but at that stage, he hadn't hit a single six. Instead, the right-hander chose to use his wrists, manoeuvre the ball into the gaps and get the nine boundaries that always kept the scoreboard moving. Skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad (15 off 18 balls) did struggle to get the run-rate going but Sanju did enough to keep the fans happy at the MA Chidambaram Stadium. The Kerala cricketer, though, got a life at 52 when Pathum Nissanka dropped a relatively easy catch at long-off off the bowling of Axar Patel.

But that was the only blemish in his innings and it gave him the confidence that it might well be his day. At the other end, he found a terrific ally in young Mhatre (59 off 36 balls). Through the middle-overs, the duo effortlessly shifted gears and kept coming up with the big hits just when it mattered. Mhatre got a life after he had crossed his half-century but CSK might have felt that they would have been better off if David Miller had accepted the chance at long-on.

Mhatre struggled a bit against the slower balls and wide yorkers of Mukesh Sharma and Lungi Ngidi and in a two-over spell when CSK managed only 12 runs that stalled their march just a bit. It forced the team management to retire him out and allow Shivam Dube to come in to accompany Sanju as he completed his century with a boundary. "A couple of failures had put in a little bit of doubt in my mind, but I decided to rely on my strengths. Happy that the runs came," Sanju said, soaking in the moment.

SCOREBOARD

CSK: S Samson not out 115, R Gaikwad c P Nissanka b A Patel 15, A Mhatre retd out 59, S Dube not out 20, **Extras: (wd-3) 3; Total: (2 wkts, 20 Overs) 212; FoW:** 62-1, 175-2; **Bowling:** A Nabi 2-0-17-0, M Kumar 4-0-37-0, A Patel 4-0-39-1, T Natarajan 4-0-54-0, L Ngidi 4-0-41-0, K Yadav 2-0-24-0

DC: Nissanka c Brevis b Kamboj 41, Rahul c Overton b Khaleel 18, Rizvi c Brevis b Overton 6, Axar c Sarfaraz b Gurjapneet 1, Miller b Overton 17, Stubbs c Noor b Overton 60, Ashutosh c Kamboj b Noor 19, Dar c Akeal b Overton 4, Kuldeep c Brevis b Kamboj 4, Ngidi c Gurjapneet b Kamboj 3, Natarajan (not out) 1; **Extras: (LB-1, W-11, NB-3) 15, Total: (All out, 20 Overs) 189; FoW:** 1-61, 2-61, 3-66, 4-76, 5-121, 6-149, 7-154, 8-183, 9-185.

Bowling: Akeal 2-0-20-0, Khaleel 3-0-40-1, Kamboj 4-0-35-3, Gurjapneet 4-0-39-1, Overton 4-0-18-4, Noor 3-0-36-1.

4 Samson's first hundred for CSK is his fourth in the IPL, the first three being 102 for DC vs Supergiants in Pune on April 11, 2017 and two for Rajasthan Royals - 102* vs SRH in Hyderabad on March 29, 2019 and 119 vs Punjab Kings at Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai on April 12, 2021.

6 Ayush Mhatre (59) is the sixth batsman to be be dismissed 'retired out' in the IPL. He joins R Ashwin, Atharva Taide, Sai Sudharsan, Tilak Varma & Devon Conway.

'Ro vs Ko' reloaded as MI eye revival

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Mumbai: Languishing in the bottom half of the table, Mumbai Indians will be desperate to rediscover form when they take on defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru at the Wankhede Stadium on Sunday night.

Both teams are coming off defeats to table-toppers Rajasthan Royals in Guwahati, where they were dismantled by 'boy wonder' Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. MI lost a rain-curtailed 11-overs-a-side contest by 27 runs while RCB went down by six wickets.

In a rare dip, MI's star pacer Jasprit Bumrah has gone wicketless in his first three IPL matches, conceding 0/88 in 11 overs at an economy rate of 8. The 31-year-old, who claimed 4/15 in the World Cup final against New Zealand in Ahmedabad, had joined the squad just before the opening game after visiting the BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru.

ROHIT'S MILESTONE MOMENT

It will be an emotional outing for Rohit Sharma, who has completed 15 years with the Mumbai Indians. The former India captain will be keen to mark the milestone with a strong performance against RCB, who boast the presence of Virat Kohli.

Having faced criticism in the past over fitness, Rohit has looked leaner, sharper and highly motivated this season. He began in style with a blazing 78 off 38 balls against KKR at the Wankhede, sharing a 148-run opening stand with Ryan Rickelton and helping MI end their 13-year streak of losing opening matches.

WEATHER
32°C

8 MI have won eight IPL matches, including six in succession (between 2016 and 2024) out of 12 contested against RCB at the Wankhede Stadium. RCB's four wins have come in 2008, 2012, 2015 and 2025.
—Stats: Rajesh Kumar

RCB LOOK TO RECOVER

Perhaps still feeling the effects of a high-scoring defeat to RR in Guwahati, RCB will need to overcome both fatigue and the psychological dent inflicted by Sooryavanshi's explosive 26-ball 78.

The visitors will look to Australian pace spearhead Josh Hazlewood to rediscover the form that saw him finish as the third-highest wicket-taker last season (22 wickets in 12 matches), playing a key role in RCB's maiden IPL title triumph. Hazlewood, however, endured a tough start this season, conceding 2 for 44 in four overs in that same Guwahati game.

The match also presents an opportunity for RCB's big-hitting finisher Tim David — a former MI player — to make a statement against his old franchise. David has already shown his prowess this season with an unbeaten 70 off 25 balls, including eight sixes, against Chennai Super Kings.

SANTNER BOOST FOR MI

In a big plus for MI, Mitchell Santner has recovered from a niggle that ruled him out of the last match and is available for selection.

Arya, Prabhsimran & Captain Iyer Help Team Chase Down 220 Against Sunrisers

Easy does it for Punjab Kings

Nitin Sharma

IN CONTROL: Shreyas Iyer hits one to the boundary as Ishan Kishan looks on

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New Chandigarh: Punjab Kings' win against Sunrisers Hyderabad on Saturday was shaped by many hands — including a stellar role played by captain Shreyas Iyer — but what stood out was the early assault from Priyansh Arya. In a chase of 220, Arya (57 off 21b; 5x4, 5x6) set the tone, giving Punjab belief that the target was chaseable.

Arya didn't wait to assess conditions, instead he imposed himself. The very first over fetched 18 runs. Prabhsimran Singh (51 off 25b; 4x4, 4x6), at the other end, slipped into the rhythm with equal assurance. The opening stand raced to 50 off just 21 balls, eventually swelling into a 99-run partnership that ensured the asking rate never spiralled. The Powerplay yielded 93 runs for Punjab. The opening act ensured Punjab were never dragged into a game of catch-up.

However, the dismissals of both openers in relatively quick succession offered Sunrisers a brief window. The surface, which had already shown signs of gripping earlier, demanded slightly more nuance.

That's where Iyer stepped in. His unbeaten 69 (33b; 5x4, 5x6) became the anchor around which Punjab's innings found balance. His innings ensured Punjab never drifted off course and they eventually crossed the line with six wickets in hand and seven balls to spare. It was a win that felt, from the moment Arya found his rhythm, almost inevitable.

Earlier, the Sunrisers innings at the Maharaja Yadavindra Singh International Stadium here was a tale of two tempos, both dictated by the now-familiar pair of 'Travishek' at the top. The pair stitched together a Powerplay assault of 105 runs, the best in IPL-2026 and third highest ever in the tournament.

Abhishek's 74 off just 28 balls (5x4, 8x6) was a statement of intent, a knock that carried both brute force and remarkable clarity of hitting. The left-hander tore into the Punjab Kings attack, racing to a half-century in just 18 balls.

At the other end, Head complemented Abhishek with a brisk 38 off 23 (5x4, 1x6), ensuring SRH reached a staggering 120 without loss after the first eight overs. It was a phase where bowling lengths were disrupted, fields scattered, and Punjab's bowlers reduced to reactive lines.

The middle order, featuring Ishan Kishan (27 off 17b; 3x4, 1x6) and Heinrich Klaasen (39 off 33b; 1x4, 1x6), couldn't quite match the opening burst.

198 Powerplay aggregate in the match — Sunrisers (105) & Punjab (93) — is the second highest in the IPL behind the 213 between Sunrisers (125) & Delhi Capitals (88) in Delhi on April 20, 2024.

20 Shreyas Iyer's unbeaten 69 is his 20th fifty in a winning cause in the IPL and his 11th half-century in successful chases.

SCOREBOARD

SRH: A Sharma c Arshdeep b Shashank 74, T Head c Bartlett b Shashank 38, I Kishan c Jansen b Arshdeep 27, H Klassen c Connolly b Bartlett 39, A Verma (run out) 18, S Arora c Bartlett b Arshdeep 9, N Reddy not out 0, H Dubey not out 1; **Extras (b-1, nb-1, wd-11) 13; Total (6 wickets, 20 overs) 219; FoW:** 1-120, 2-122, 3-169, 4-195, 5-214, 6-218; **Bowling:** Arshdeep 4-0-50-2, X Bartlett 4-0-42-1, M Jansen 4-0-40-0, V Vijayakumar 2-0-33-0, S Singh 3-0-20-2, Y Chahal 3-0-33-0

PBKS: P Arya c N Reddy b S Kumar 57, Prabhsimran c H Klaasen b S Kumar 51, C Connolly c A Verma b S Kumar 11, S Iyer not out 69, N Wadhera b H Dubey 14, S Singh not out 16; **Extras: (W-5) 5; Total: (4 wkts, 18.5 Overs) 223; FoW:** 99-1, 117-2, 128-3, 197-4; **Bowling:** H Dubey 4-0-38-1, J Unadkat 3-0-40-0, E Malinga 3-0-46-0, H Patel 2-0-39-0, S Kumar 4-0-33-3, N Reddy 2-0-20-0, A Sharma 0.5-0-7-0

10 times Punjab Kings have successfully chased a score of 200+ in the IPL, extending their record. Mumbai Indians have accomplished the feat six times.

Can Lucknow solve Powerplay puzzle?

Fazal Khan | TNN

Lucknow: The Super Giants return to Ekana on Sunday with momentum but not without a lingering concern. They have won two on the bounce after opening the season with a defeat, yet their starts remain patchy: LSG were 48/2 in the Powerplay against Delhi Capitals, 53/1 against Sunrisers Hyderabad and 56/2 against Kolkata Knight Riders.

For a batting group featuring Mitchell Marsh, Aiden Markram and Nicholas Pooran, that is still under par. Sunday's afternoon clash against Gujarat Titans here will test whether LSG can reverse this trend.

Saturday's training session suggested local conditions will again be the key subplot. A mixed-soil strip was rolled at Ekana and both teams trained through the afternoon heat. LSG pacer Mohsin Khan, incidentally, has been ruled out due to a niggle.

LSG have ridden out their uneven starts because the middle order and bowling unit have repeatedly kept them alive. Ayush Badoni and Mukul Choudhary dragged them home against KKR while Mohammed Shami's new-ball burst set up the win over Sunrisers. Mukul's growing influence was evident when Gujarat Titans head coach Ashish Nehra spent around 15 minutes conversing with him at the nets.

Mukul's emergence has added fresh depth but Lucknow would prefer not to keep needing rescue acts.

FACE-OFF
LSG vs GT
TV TIME: 3.30 PM
STAR SPORTS
JIOHOTSTAR

WEATHER
35°C

ODDS
LSG 11/10 | GT 8/10

117 Mitchell Marsh's 64-ball knock for LSG in Ahmedabad on May 22, 2025 remains the only hundred in the IPL involving both these teams.

HOW THEY STAND

TEAM	M	W	L	NR	NRR	P
RR	4	4	0	0	2.055	8
PBKS	4	3	0	1	0.720	7
RCB	3	2	1	0	1.231	4
DC	4	2	2	0	0.322	4
LSG	3	2	1	0	-0.359	4
SRH	4	1	3	0	-0.024	2
GT	3	1	2	0	-0.270	2
MI	3	1	2	0	-0.715	2
CSK	4	1	3	0	-1.532	2
KKR	4	0	3	1	-1.315	1

HIGHEST POWERPLAY SCORES IN IPL

Team	Powerplay score
SRH	125/0 (vs DC, Delhi, 2024)
SRH	107/0 (vs LSG, Hyderabad, 2024)
KKR	105/0 (vs RCB, Bengaluru, 2017)
SRH	105/0 (vs PBKS, New Chandigarh, 2026)

Part-timer Shashank emerges unlikely hero

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Mullanpur: In a game dominated by big hits and rapid shifts in momentum, it was a quiet moment of trust that stood out. Shreyas Iyer, reading the situation, turned to part-timer Shashank Singh for an over at a time when Sunrisers openers Abhishek Sharma and Travis Head were taking apart the frontline Punjab bowlers with ease. "All of us came together, and Shashank approached me and said, 'Give me an over'. Ricky Ponting came and asked me, 'What're your thoughts on this? I said, 'I'll go with Shashank.' I needed someone to take the pace off," Iyer said.

That faith was rewarded instantly as Shashank sent back both the Sunrisers openers. "He lived up to my expectations, he lived up to what he said, kudos to him. At the end of the day, we all know we've got the skills. All we need is a strong mindset," Iyer added.

WE'RE MISSING CUMMINS: AARON

Sunrisers Hyderabad bowling coach Varun Aaron said the absence of regular captain and premier fast bowler Pat Cummins had hampered the side's progress. "There's no two ways that we're missing Pat (Cummins)," Aaron said. "He's somebody who can get us wickets with the new ball, in the middle and even at the death."

GALLERY

Indian paddlers dominate

Indian paddlers underlined their regional dominance, winning 13 gold medals across categories at the South Asian Youth Table Tennis Championships.

Results (Finals, Indians unless mentioned): Boys: U-19: Singles: Priyanuj Bhattacharyya bt Punit Biswas 11-7, 6-11, 11-7, 11-6; **Doubles:** MR Balamurugan/Mehan Senthil bt Abul Hsib/Nafiz Iqbal 9-11, 11-7, 11-4, 11-5; **U-15: Singles:** Aditya Das bt Akshay Kirikara 11-6, 11-6, 11-6; **Doubles:** Rishaan Chattopadhyay/Akash Rajavelu bt Reevan Bajracharya/Nischal Thapa 8-11, 13-11, 9-11, 11-1, 11-4; **Girls: U-19: Singles:** Jennifer Varghese bt Ananya Muralidharan 7-11, 11-9, 11-8, 11-6; **Doubles:** Prisha Goel/Ditsa Roy bt Binaca Rai/Evaana Thapa 11-5, 11-9, 13-11; **U-15: Singles:** Ankolika Chakraborty bt Aahona Ray 12-10, 15-13, 8-11, 11-5; **Doubles:** Sreejani Chakraborty/Tanishka Kalbhairav bt Arsana Maharjan/Suramya Shakya (Nep) 14-16, 11-5, 11-5, 11-4; U-19: **Mixed doubles:** Priyanuj/Jennifer bt Mohammed Rafiu/Fathimath Ali (Mdv) 12-10, 11-2, 11-5; U-15 Mixed Doubles: Aditya Das/Ankolika Chakraborty (Ind) bt Rafiu/Aishath Nafiz 11-5, 11-4, 11-9.

Baisoya claims maiden IGPL title: Sachin Baisoya carded a five-under 67 to register his maiden win on the IGPL Tour, clinching the title in Port Louis, Mauritius on Saturday. The 30-year-old finished at 11-under, three shots clear of overnight leader Veer Ganapathy, who signed off at 8-under after an even-par round. For the 18-year-old Ganapathy, it was the third runner-up finish.

India go down to Russia: The Indian U-17 women's team lost 0-4 to Russia in the first of three friendly matches at the Matsesta Football Center in Sochi, Russia, on Saturday. Valeria Menyailova put the hosts ahead in the 44th minute. Dana Dobrovitskaya and Alisa Klimova converted penalties in the 57th and 72nd minutes respectively, before Angelina Gulyayeva rounded off the scoring in the 88th minute.

Vaishali inches closer to world c'ship match

Indian beats Goryachkina to extend lead at the top

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Chennai, India's chess capital, could well host the world championship match but in the women's version. Here's how.

With three rounds remaining, if R Vaishali manages to hold on to her lead in the ongoing Candidates or wins the event, via tiebreak, the Chennai girl gets a chance to challenge women's world champion Ju Wenjun of China.

On Saturday, Vaishali was quick to spot Aleksandra Goryachkina's folly and capitalised on the Russian's generosity to score a pivotal win in the 11th round of the Women's Candidates in Cyprus. The full point took the Indian — the lowest rated player in the eight-player field with Elo rating of 2470 and women's world ranking of 19 — to seven points. It helped her retain the lead after Zhu Jiner and Anna Muzychuk (both at 6 points) drew with Divya Deshmukh and Kateryna Lagno respectively.

CANDIDATES CHESS

Before the Candidates started, there was a talk of Vaishali's brother R Praggnanandhaa winning the Open version and the possibility of him challenging D Gukesh for the world crown at home for both players — Tamil Nadu. It looks like it could be the sister's turn instead. Goyrachkina had missed a win in rook ending (with extra pawn) against Divya Deshmukh in the third round. On Saturday, she was in the precarious position with white pieces against Vaishali after 29 moves with her rook in an odd square.

In trying to simplify rook, knight, five pawns and light-coloured bishop endgame, Goryachkina offered Vaishali bishop exchange. That swung the Stockfish evaluation in Vaishali's favour by three points.

Animesh wins double

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New Delhi: The spotlight at the Indian Athletics Series was shared between a returning star and a rising force, as Hima Das made a long-awaited comeback while Animesh Kujur stamped his authority with a sprint double here.

The 22-year-old clinched the 200m title in 20.74 seconds before edging to victory in a thrilling 100m final. He was initially tied with Tamil Arasu at 10.28 seconds, but the final reading gave him victory by the narrowest of margins—10.272 to 10.280 seconds.

Hima Das's return was one of the most keenly watched. The Asian Games medalist looked short of her best but showed glimpses of promise. She clocked 25.42 seconds in the women's 200m and 57.94 seconds in the 400m, finishing among the slower runners in both events.

India stun Korea but fail to seal playoff spot

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SAVING GRACE: Vaishnavi Adkar

New Delhi: Desperate times call for desperate measures. That rang true for India heading into their final Billie Jean King (BJK) Cup tie against South Korea on Saturday. Needing a flawless 3-0 victory to keep their playoff hopes alive, the hosts faced a daunting task against a strong Korean side. While the parallel tie between Indonesia and Thailand also held significance for the final standings, India's equation was simple – win comprehensively or bow out.

BJK CUP

The campaign, however, unravelled early. India's gamble to field Ankita Raina in the opening singles didn't pay off as she fell 1-6, 5-7 to Dayeon Back. That defeat effectively ended India's chances of breaking into the top-two and qualifying for the World Group playoffs.

Captain Vishal Uppal had kept his strategy under wraps, resting Ankita in the previous tie against Mongolia, only to spring a surprise by fielding her in singles. The 33-year-old, ranked 581, came up with a spirited performance in the second set her higher-ranked opponent.

India, however, did show resilience. Vaishnavi Adkar delivered a standout performance, defeating Sohyun Park 7-6(2), 7-6(5) in a gritty contest to level the tie. The doubles pair of Ankita and Rutuja Bhosale then sealed a 2-1 win over the Koreans with a commanding 6-2, 6-2 victory.

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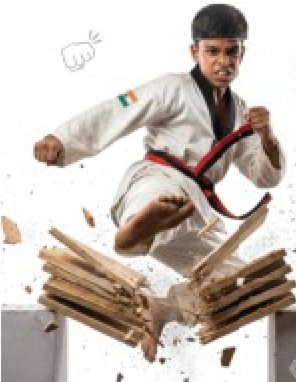

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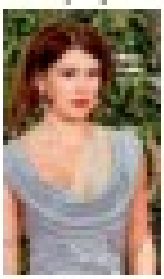

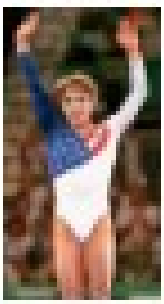

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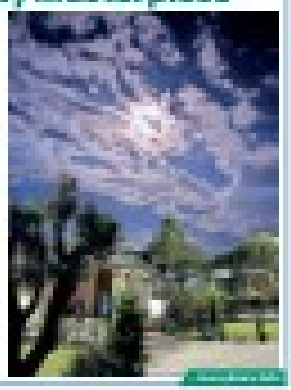

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